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KATE CHASE  
DOMINANT DAUGHTER







KATE CHASE

*O M I N A N T   D A U G H T E R*

THE LIFE STORY  
OF A BRILLIANT WOMAN

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*TO MY SISTER*

OF THE BRAVE SMILE AND THE HELPFUL HAND



## FOREWORD

The Chase Papers in the Library of Congress furnished an enormous mass of documentary ore from which to hew out this dual biography of Kate Chase and her father. Though three lives of the great statesman himself are available, they deal chiefly with the man as a public leader rather than a private individual. The present volume attempts to delineate his character, his motives and ideals and, above all else, his domestic and affectional ties—the man himself detached as far as possible from his political life.

The first-hand material from which to recreate Chase, the man, almost unlimited as it is, covering fifty years from his youth to old age, yields little data concerning the brilliant daughter, Kate. She herself left little beyond some half-dozen letters, precious nuggets of gold to the biographer. Only through persistent research has the author been able to present a portrait of this fascinating woman and her distinguished father. Here they stand, arm in arm, awaiting favorable reception from both students of history and lovers of romance.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The number is legion of those who have contributed towards the completion of this book and to whom grateful appreciation should be extended. The unceasing courtesy and helpfulness of Librarians wherever aid was sought, the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress, the Pennsylvania Historical Society and the Rhode Island Historical Society, places the author greatly in their debt. Thanks are specially due to the relatives and friends of Kate Chase who granted interviews and answered letters relative to the life and character of the subject; also to the many former students of the Haines School who responded graciously to the questionnaire sent to gain information of that famous institution of the Middle Nineteenth Century.

The invaluable service of friends and critics who generously gave their help in the revision of the text, and that of writers and historians whose kindly interest led them to examine the manuscript and proffer advice and encouragement, can never be forgotten.

To name all those who in one form or another have contributed to the making of the book is not possible—the list is too long. Suffice it to say that each and every one is gratefully held in memory by the author.

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## I

### BACKGROUND

ON an early April morning, 1830, a tall, eager-eyed young man of twenty-two stepped off the gang-plank of an Ohio River steamer at Cincinnati onto the bustling wharf of that metropolis of the West. Five days before, he had started out from Washington City by stage, through mud hub-deep that soon threw the horses and upset the coach—a common occurrence at this time of year. Salmon Portland Chase, we must believe, took the exigencies of travel with more philosophic calm than did the aspersive Englishwoman, Frances Milton Trollope, who but a few days previously had covered the same route in the opposite direction: Cincinnati to Wheeling by boat, thence to Baltimore over rough mountain roads that tossed the passengers about “like a few potatoes in a wheelbarrow.”

Young Chase from early boyhood had been inured to hardship. As a boy of twelve he had left his mother's home in New Hampshire for the wilds of the Ohio frontier, going by flatboat and horseback to reach the settlement where Philander Chase, Bishop of the Episcopal Church, had founded a boys' school. Uncle Philander had offered to take the fatherless nephew and educate him, and the zealous priest did not fail in his duty as he saw it, though the boy paid well for his training. Milking, going to mill and bringing back the meal be-

fore breakfast was a not unusual opening of the day's program. After morning prayers came lessons. Latin was the main course of the Bishop's menus provided for the young boys in his charge, a Dr. Blimber diet that demanded chiefly the dead languages. Uncle Philander wished to make a clergyman out of his nephew, and to that end crammed him with indigestible theology, such as *Grotius de Veritate Religionis Christinae*. |

That the lad might become duly humble under the scourgings of life, he was punished for slight misdemeanors quite out of proportion to the crime. On one occasion he was forced to rise before daylight to bring into the house an enormous pile of wood. Salmon was not lacking in proper spirit—he had once kicked a boy who called him “Yankee”—and while he worked he rebelled within; and when Eleazer Hubble, a paying pupil and a “sneak,” came along and saluted the culprit he spurted out his spite against the Bishop with, “He’s a darned old tyrant,” a remark promptly reported to the Headmaster. Young Chase was instantly “put in coventry”—that is, no one was permitted to speak to him nor he to anyone. After a few days of this humiliating ostracism he “confessed himself wrong,” a lie he all his life regretted. When Bishop Chase moved to Cincinnati as president of the newly founded college, the nephew accompanied the family and was enrolled as freshman and soon promoted to sophomore. Salmon’s classical fare was doubled. He was given a Latin quarto parchment to masticate. He pronounced an oration on Saint Paul and Saint John in original Greek, to the great pride of the Bishop. The young boy lived the life of a recluse. Social recreation was taboo. One evening, hun-

gering for company, he called on the rector of the parish, and was severely punished for it.

After three years of this monastic life, Salmon returned to his doting mother and sisters with no grateful remembrance of his Ohio experience and still less affection for his "extremely good" Uncle Philander. Nor had the youth, a few years later, great reason for gratitude towards his Uncle Dudley, Senator Chase, when the young collegian appealed to him for assistance—another story. Now it is the mother that finds a way to promote the welfare of her favorite son. Widow Chase without financial resource was willing to wash or scour to get her boy through college, provided he was prudent and economical and counted his pennies. "Even sixpence a week will make twenty-six shillings in a year," reckoned the little Scotchwoman. Soon after his arrival home from Ohio, the fifteen-year-old lad was ensconced in the long, low parlor of the old yellow house, poring over his Latin and Greek for the Dartmouth entrance examination; while the mother and sisters were cheerfully stitching shirts, pants, and vests, making over his elder brothers' suits to fit him out with needful attire, which in final verdict the mother approves in Gaelic fashion with, "Auld claes look amaist as weel's the new." On arrival within academic walls we may be sure he was not looked down upon because of his home-made clothes—they were the common thing.

Followed three years of alternate study and teaching of district school, "a horrid, delightful employment," disciplining the "savages of our enlightened land," and counting his shillings as he walked to his boarding-round place of residence to be favored by the "greasiest nutcakes and the largest pieces of pie." Then Master

Chase, armed with sheepskin and a Phi Beta key dangling from his watchchain and a half dozen letters of introduction in his pocket to notables in the Capital City, set forth into the world, "with few to cry God speed you and none to lend an assisting hand." He had decided to take up the profession of law, and while preparing for admission to the bar, his plan was to open a classical school for boys. The church as a life work he had abandoned, though he had not sluffed off his piety. That was ingrained for life. Uncle Philander had done his work well.

An awkward, stooped, silent youth of eighteen, afraid of men but less of women, arrived in Washington, December 1st, 1826. With the confidence of the unsophisticated and a Spartan determination to win out, he inserted a card in the *National Intelligencer*: "Select Classical School to commence on the Second Monday in January. Pupils limited to twenty. References: Hon. Henry Clay, Hon. D. Chase, two Representatives, and two clergymen." He then waited for the response. Only one applicant came, Columbus Bonfils, the alpha and omega of the preceptor's hope. Day by day his resources dwindled, until, pride in pocket, he applied to his Senator Uncle for a government job, and had this reply: "I once spoiled a fellow by getting him such a position. I will lend you fifty cents to buy a spade, but I cannot get you a clerkship." The young man had no notion of delving in the earth for a living; his passion was books.

Then by lucky chance he found himself a school already organized by a Mr. Plumly, who gave over his pupils to the young Dartmouth graduate, while the elder man devoted himself to a girls' department. Mas-

ter Chase started in with twenty "scholars," each paying him from \$5. to \$12. per quarter—to his mind, ample remuneration, though his expenses were "great." All but two of the Cabinet members were represented: Attorney General Wirt's two boys, young Clay, and a dozen and a half more saplings, including a nephew of the President's wife, made up the bunch of twigs to be bent in the way they should go.

A few hours each afternoon Chase spent in the Attorney General's office reading Blackstone. Evenings he went out in society. The Wirts made him at home in their delightful circle, Mrs. Wirt, author of the "Language of Flowers," walked in the garden with the country youth and explained the symbolism of rose and heartsease; she stood on the portico with him under the clusters of multiflora which clambered over the trellis and pointed out the constellations. Within the parlor, the three sisters each of whom played a musical instrument, sang ballads and recited poetry. Mr. Wirt also was a musician and a minor poet. Young Chase had little knowledge of music except hymns, but he could write verse, and in the Wirt sisters he found his inspiration. He poured out fervent tributes to all three of them without well knowing which was the loveliest of the Graces. Later Elizabeth, the eldest, proved to engage most completely the heart of the susceptible young man. He describes her as "modest, with richly cultivated mind and most amiable disposition." She moves like a wind-borne thing over the earth, her step almost a dance, "so much is she borne up by the excitement of her joyous spirits."

The youthful pedagogue testifies to his dread of formal society: "I was too diffident to push myself into

notice, too proud to ask for recognition. . . . I was poor and sensitive." But he was of heroic mold and under the irresistible propulsion of the fair sex he allowed himself to be drawn out into the swim. Properly matronized, he escorted young ladies to the White House levees, which under the John Quincy Adams administration were extremely ceremonious and exclusive. From the shadow of the background he looked on and passed mental comment. The First Lady he thought "very fine looking and said to possess a very liberal disposition." The little President, "cold and reserved," thrust out his hand with an 'I am very happy to see you, sir,' precisely as the automaton chess player would make a move. He is "stiff as a crowbar." The young sons,<sup>1</sup> George and John Adams, appeared "nothing remarkable either in persons or mind." So much for the Adams family!

One evening, at a private home, young Chase met Mrs. Randolph, Thomas Jefferson's daughter, and found her worthy of her great father. "Among the bright constellation of feminine excellence in the room by far the most splendid star . . . with her majestic and queenly demeanor and her wonderful talent and her brilliant conversation. . . . A weak mind never inhabited a form so commanding or imparted so much expression to a countenance," he wrote in his journal. The Randolph girls suffered by comparison with their mother. The embryo jurist applies the English law of inheritance to heredity. "Some of her daughters were also present but unfortunately, in our country, talent seems to go according to the statute of distribution as

<sup>1</sup> Charles Francis Adams, the third son, is not mentioned.

well as estates. Very little of the ancestors' possessions ever reach *the third generation*."

¶Young Chase also cultivated notable men. He met Calhoun and was often at the home of Henry Clay. Daniel Webster, "the noble, magnanimous, upright and talented," received the deepest respect from the future statesman.<sup>2</sup> He listened to the giant debater's "Reply to Hayne" "with great admiration" and with less approval saw this same Hercules, one evening at a party, toss off a glass of undiluted brandy with no more than a slight grimace. The abstemious Chase deplored the worship of Bacchus. If the scholarly young man's manners were softened by social experience, his morals remained as crystal hard as ever. Through two Washington seasons he had learned to hand in, without too much *gaucherie*, young misses in much ruffled crêpe gowns a yard and a half in width, classic in scantiness, and watch twinkling feet in rosetted slippers, as they moved through the mazes of the waltz, newly introduced, that enemy of feminine modesty, that "unmitigated nuisance" as it was termed by the *unco gude*. For himself he acquired none of the social vices. Even the reading of novels he condemned. "They may impart a little brilliancy to the imagination but at length like an intoxicating draught they enfeeble and deaden the powers of thought and action." Chase was a saintly ascetic. Yet in spite of his rigid sanctimony he made friends. ¶The Wirt family thought him full of talent and destined to become a distinguished man. ¶

Salmon Portland Chase, aged twenty-one, presented an altogether improved appearance from that of

<sup>2</sup>Twenty years after, Chase's estimate of Webster was modified. He had fallen from his majestic and inspiring godship.

eighteen. His figure had filled out, his stooped carriage was straightened, and his manners limbered up. Much of this development was due to the culture acquired in the Attorney General's home, which had become almost like his own home. April, 1829, the charming family were leaving Washington permanently. Their house was put up for public sale. Chase wandered sadly through the deserted and dismantled rooms. He went into Elizabeth's dressing room, where she had spent "many a moment elaborating her French puffs" while he was impatiently awaiting her appearance below. He still felt amorous drawing toward this cultivated young lady, but relinquished the fantasy by "the strong voice of cold Reason that says 'It cannot be.'" With the removal of the Wirts from Washington, the young man found himself on the social sea without a rudder, yet managed to keep afloat.

He still cultivated the ladies and became a great lover of the sex. One evening he attended two debutantes to a concert, one of whom was Elizabeth Cabell, "a pretty young lady of eighteen," with fresh rose-petal complexion, "singularly sensible and intelligent but timid as a fawn." So he records in the confidential diary—and a few days later, "I have for some time lived in a dream from which I was partially awakened today." Tradition has it that young Chase at this time so far forgot himself as to propose marriage to the exquisite young F.F.V. and was refused on the ground that he was only a poor pedagogue without prospects. A few weeks later, the lovesick swain records his convalescence. "Almost awakened from my dream." Just before Miss Cabell's leaving the Capital, she begs that he write in her album. He replies sadly that his "lyre



is broken." "You must repair it," says she. A brief quatrain is all he can produce from the shattered instrument.

Fain would I bind my memory to all,  
The glorious things of heaven, the beautiful  
Creations of the earth, and teach the breeze  
To whisper of my name, that I might be the absent  
unforgotten.

So endeth young Lothario's second lesson in love. About this time an Unknown Mary laid siege to his heart but without success. To her he can offer only a brotherly blessing with the hope that the lovely Mary find a mate altogether her equal.

His love be thine who is all truth, all nobleness, all mind;  
The ardors of whose generous Youth by Virtue are refined.  
Be of the noblest and the best, the best and noblest he.  
And summing in one word the rest, may he be worthy thee.

Sentiment was being crowded out of the young man's thoughts by serious consideration of his career. His life plan was to practice law until he had accumulated enough to make him "independent of the world," then to "run a political career." He had already formulated his credo of conduct for life. "This world" he regarded as a "vast theater upon which each man has a part allotted to him to perform and duties to discharge which connect him closely with his fellowman. I confess and desire to be distinguished, but I desire more to be useful." Here in a nutshell we have the epitome of his ambition.

For two years in a desultory sort of way he had read law without direction from Attorney Wirt. Once only that gentleman casually inquired of the young student if he understood what he was reading, and he replied,

"Yes"; but later he confessed that "only by meditation and talking it over could one really understand Blackstone." Nevertheless, by the good graces of Judge Cranch before whom the young man came for admission to the bar, he was admitted, because needy and because he had made plans to go West and practice. He had chosen Cincinnati, rather than Baltimore where the good Wirt family had settled, again giving Reason the right of way. "I would rather be first in Cincinnati than first in Baltimore twenty years hence."

Cincinnati, during the seven years since he had left Ohio as the spindling lad of fifteen, had grown with like rapidity as himself. The Queen of the West now boasted 25,000 souls. On that early morning of the seventh day of April, 1830, as the young man stood on the men's cabin deck and scanned the shores of *La Belle Riviere*—on the left, Kentucky, on the right, Ohio—in place of small hamlets on either side, he recognized the great amphitheater of primeval forest was now broken by cultivation, by farms and vineyards, and marts of commerce. Within a half dozen years many public buildings had sprung up. As the boat curved in towards the wharf, he could count twenty-five church spires. The town already boasted of two museums and six library reading rooms, five private "female academies," and eleven schools for boys. He stepped onto a landing bustling with activity.

Emigrants from Germany, Holland, Scotland and Ireland, many still wearing peasant costume, mingled with Negroes, all vigorously competing with one another in acquiring a living in this new land. Walking up the steep ascent of Front Street and on to the one paved thoroughfare, Main Street, carpet bag in

hand, he sought a cheap hotel. He took a room to suit his pocketbook, "much larger than I needed, for I am but six feet one or two, and the chamber was at least ten by six." He felt himself a stranger in a strange land, embarked upon a great adventure. He opened an office and hung out his shingle. A stray client or two called. The first one gave him a dollar to draw up a deed, the second borrowed ten dollars and decamped. His friend, Hamilton Smith, a plantation owner of Louisville, loaned the impecunious lawyer enough to live on until he could get a start. His many poor relations, soon after his arrival, appear to have planned their exodus from New England to "the Ohio." First came his eldest sister, Abigail Chase Colby, with husband and children. William, youngest and the black sheep of the family, drew upon Salmon's patience as well as his pocketbook, until finally it was necessary to refuse help, and urge "self-reliance under Providence."<sup>8</sup> The unmarried sisters, Alice and Helen, were partially dependent upon their lawyer brother. Following them, a nephew and two nieces came on to live with "Uncle" and get an education.

Multiplication of the Chases in Cincinnati doubtless embarrassed the young attorney. He got to hate the name of *Chase*, and as for *Salmon Portland*, that was nauseating. He seriously considered throwing the whole patronymic cargo overboard. To a former college friend he confided his problem:

I have been thinking whether it wouldn't be a good plan to change my awkward fish name, which was given me to perpetuate the memory of an Uncle (whose family has no

<sup>8</sup> Visits from the libidinous William also were discouraged.

intercourse with ours) for some other. I have thought too of getting the consent of my brothers to change the spelling of our surname so as to disconnect us from the world a little more than we are. How would this name do—Spencer De Cheyce or Spencer Payne Cheyce? Perhaps you will laugh at this but I assure you I have suffered no little inconvenience from this single circumstance. Laugh or not, however, you need not mention it.

His friend must have smiled at least over this piece of priggish egotism. Evidently, punning persiflage had goaded him to the extreme of control. The suggested changes in name were not made. The "monument" sacred to Uncle Salmon of Portland, Maine, stood intact, a burden to the heir.

¶ In spite of personal handicaps, the young attorney forged ahead towards his goal which was to be the "first." He founded a lyceum and gave lectures. He was the solicitor of two banks in the city. He steadily gained the confidence of leading citizens; chief among them were the Burnetts and Longworths. The Burnett residence occupied a block, and the Longworth mansion, "Belmont," with gardens surrounding it, was even more impressive. In reply to an invitation of the proprietor, Nicholas Longworth, that Mr. Chase take entire charge of the great wine-grower's interests, the young lawyer replies that though he is much obliged for the favorable estimate the proposition itself implies, "in behalf of the Banks which have been engaged in suits adversely to you," he feels he cannot accept the opportunity. Socially, the lawyer quickly made his way.

Notwithstanding Mrs. Trollope's denial of any such thing as polite society in Cincinnati in the early Thirties, a very good imitation, at least, of that illusory quality, Culture, was to be discovered in the younger genera-

tion. The young ladies, many of them pretty of face—this the spiteful-tongued critic admitted—were not all lacking in grace of manner and speech, as she would have us believe, sitting in silent neglect around the parlor wall at evening parties, while the young men made merry in the adjoining dining-room. To be sure, Chase missed the grace and repartee of the Washington ladies as well as the intellectual stimulus of that city. Before very long, a literary club was founded, known as the "Semicolon," which met at the members' homes every two weeks; the gentlemen furnished the mental pabulum of original papers, readings and discussion, and the ladies modestly occupied themselves with becoming fancy work. After refreshments, the evening closed with a gay Virginia reel—an omitted number with Chase.

Three years, and the young attorney's fortunes founded, he now seriously considered marriage, and began to pass critical appraisal on the young ladies of the town, who up to this time had failed to enthrall his mind and heart. With wistful regret he had cherished the picture of one fair maid,<sup>4</sup> her "rare ability to please without art, her face one a sculptor would choose for a model, form slight and frail but exquisitely molded. Her motion free as the summer breeze, soft and gentle as sweet music—sweeter, because like the tones of the wind harp they are unsubjected to the rules of art." There was but one single flaw in this lovely maiden, one taste dissimilar between them. She was fond of the gay world, while he had no desire to partake of its vanities; she was disinclined to religion and its duties, while he valued them "more than any earthly possession." And yet once again he found himself facing the

<sup>4</sup> Doubtless Miss Cabell, though the name is unrevealed.

same question at issue, charm versus piety. Girls all were frivolous.

Catherine Garniss, only child of doting parents, was born in New York city. She was travelled and accomplished. After a season in New Orleans, the then popular winter resort, she arrived in Cincinnati with her parents, who took rooms at the Pearl Street Hotel. Catherine was launched in society and soon won the title "Queen of the North," a young lady greatly admired and sought after. Chase steeled himself against her attractions. He denied to himself that she was beautiful. He was sure she was worldly and non-religious. With triple plate steel armor he withstood Cupid's shafts. By constant guard he repelled for a time the tricky Amor. Spring, 1883. The young man's fancy turned to thoughts of love, and all things conspired to their indulgence.

April 28. Mr. Garniss was making up a riding party to go out through the wooded roads about the city. He invited Mr. Chase to join it, but he refused and went instead with his friend Joseph Longworth,<sup>5</sup> afterwards going to the Longworth Mansion to call. For twenty-four hours, Chase sequestered himself from the presence of the Siren, then succumbed and made a call upon Miss G. The next morning he said to Mr. Garniss that if his daughter would like to attend the May Day Exhibition at a girls school out of town he would be glad to attend her. The die was cast. The couple started off in the cool morning and rode back in the broiling sun at noon—an unromantic atmosphere—and they agreed upon a ride in the evening by moonlight—more

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Longworth Yale '32 afterwards married Annie Rives of Virginia. Chase found in young Longworth a cultured companion.

conductive to love-making. Alas, the company was large, too large for the lover—four ladies and six gentlemen—and our predestined suitor was unhappy. "*I abominate large companies,*" he declares impatiently. Then, too, the dust was intolerable and the sultry air almost suffocating, though everyone but Chase was able to rise above the depression. "For myself, I felt languid and unwell, and said little, nor said that little well. I was reproached for my dullness, but reproaches had no effect on me." Arrived back in town, the glum escort took tea in the Garniss parlor, then retired, ill satisfied with himself. He was in for a siege of love-sickness.

Still in the doldrums the following day, Chase called upon young Longworth and talked half an hour, "principally on the effect of the affections on the happiness and true glory of human life." Plainly the attorney's mind was not on his law business. On leaving the grounds, he chatted a moment with the sisters, Eliza and Catherine Longworth, then went to call upon Miss Cassily, a social leader at whose house Chase first met Miss Garniss. Home to his room he read a chapter from the Word, and after committing himself to the keeping of his "greatest and best and only true friend," he lay down to sleep.

The next day was Sunday. With conscience twinging from his worldliness of the previous week, the unhappy young man attempted to retrace his path along spiritual ways. His usual devotional exercises were followed by the reading of a sermon by Dr. Beecher,<sup>6</sup> after which he went with his sister to the Episcopal Church. So negligently did he listen that he could not remember

<sup>6</sup>Lyman Beecher, President of Lane Theological Seminary and Pastor of Presbyterian Church.

afterwards so much as the subject of the sermon. After dining with a man friend, and indulging in "worldly and frivolous talk" he went in the afternoon, to Dr. Beecher's church and listened to his sermon on the "unreasonableness of unbelief"—presumably finding the rapid-firing radical not difficult to follow. Afterwards, he went with a brother lawyer to his rooms and there permitted the conversation to take a "literary and political turn." After tea he made his Sunday call on his sister and then went to his own room, thoroughly repentant to have spent a Sabbath "as unprofitable and as sinfully as I have done in years. May the Lord pardon me." He had read one sermon and listened to two!

The attorney's sensitive conscience troubled him not only because of his having given place to worldly thoughts on the Sabbath Day, but also because of waste of time—in itself, to him, a sin. To this transgression he was particularly liable within the Garniss' parlors where during the coming year he was frequently "cheated of time." While being drawn more and more within the golden net of Catherine's fascination, he resented but was unable to resist its thralldom. One Sunday, in late winter, 1834, when already the two were engaged, after attending church with Mr. Garniss through a chance meeting, he called at the young lady's home and found mother and daughter entertaining a gentleman, the elder woman with Bulwer's "England and the English" in her hand. On the gentleman's leaving, Miss G. gossiped a bit about the departed guest, citing an instance of his eccentricity. (Censoring the absent, Chase frequently observed was a common feminine flaw.) In the chiding silence that followed, the mother rose and left the room, leaving the young peo-



ple to regain social rapport. Catherine then told her lover of a dream she had had the previous night.

They were together at the Longworths. Her critical suitor saw a drop of water on his fiancée's cheek and in wiping it off discovered that she was rouged. He upbraided her with deception and she defended herself, averring that this was the first time she ever had used paint. Her lover would not believe her, and she after vain attempts to restrain her feelings sobbed violently. Her mother in another room, hearing her daughter in such evident distress, came to her bedside and awakened her and the two laughed heartily at the incident. "Dreams go by contraries," 'twas said in that day. No presage of future unhappiness shadowed the heart of the engaged girl.

Another few weeks, and Salmon Portland Chase and Catherine Jane Garniss were married by Lyman Beecher, the bridegroom's pastor. The bride, not a member of the church, the husband felt assured he could bring within the safety of the fold; the wife, fully recognizing his personal deficiencies, was confident of her ability to correct them. "He is so uncouth and has such an unmanageable mouth, but wait till I polish him up a little!" she said to a friend.

Nor was the young lawyer rich in this world's goods, though neither was he poor. It was boom time and land investments were tempting. Chase owned a number of pieces of real estate—mortgaged to be sure—and enjoyed the self-approbation that comes from being a land owner. With the happy prospect of a family, the young man became more prudent in business and resolved to refuse to endorse his friends' notes—except those of his father-in-law, "if he should ask it." He became more

tender of his wife, though her prospective maternity gave him little solicitude. His mother had borne eleven children—it was a natural function.

November 14, 1835, Catherine Chase was delivered of a little daughter and everyone concerned was the subject of congratulation. The naming of the baby created an altercation between the proud father and the grandmother. Mrs. Garniss was determined the babe should be named after herself—but *Amelia* was repugnant to him. "Kitty wished it called *Amelia Catherine* or *Amelia Jannette*" after the two grandmothers, and he was agreeable to this arbitration but not so his mother-in-law. She flew into a rage and said "she didn't care how it's called," that she would take no more notice of it and "a great deal of the same import." Several days passed. The babe was two weeks old and should be named and christened. The young mother, still suffering from puerperal fever, asked to have *Amelia Jannette* engraved on the baby's tiny bracelets, thus closing the incident—as she thought. Death, the arbiter, however, was to reverse the decision and give the name *Catherine Jane* to the tiny daughter.

When the Lafayette Bank asked Chase to go to Philadelphia on business for them, he hesitated, reluctant to leave his wife while still ill, but she, eager for his advancement, urged him to go, and he acceded. He bade her good-bye fully confident that on his return he would find her much better—a false hope. Her fever continuing, the doctors used the lancet, once, twice.<sup>7</sup> In a few hours, Catherine Chase sank away in death. Mr. Chase was anxiously waiting for a boat in Wheeling

<sup>7</sup>Thirty ounces of blood were taken and the patient was given thirty grains of calomel.

to bring him home, when he received the sad news that dashed the "cup of anticipated joy" from his lips. On a cold December midnight, he walked from the wharf to his door where the crêpe confirmed the dreadful truth. Wishing not to disturb Mr. and Mrs. Garniss, he went to his sister's house for the remaining night, and returned the next morning to the house of death.

I went upstairs. There, in our nuptial chamber, in her coffin, lay my sweet wife. Lovely in death, the beauteous ruin lay. She was but little changed in features but O, the look of life was gone. The sweet smile, the glance of affection, the expression, the mind, was gone. Nothing was left but clay. I kneeled before her, and implored God to restore her to me. . . . My prayer was not heard. I kissed her cold lips. They returned no pressure as they were wont. I pressed her cold but still noble forehead. She was dead.

Until the day of the funeral, when the body was committed to a friend's vault, the stricken husband was almost continually beside the dead body, and afterwards he visited the grave daily. Christmas Day was sad beyond expression. "One thought filled my mind, one emotion occupied my whole soul, my great, my irreparable loss; my wife, my dear wife, gone, never to return. Oh! how I accused myself of folly and weakness in leaving her when yet sick." He continues the record of his grief.

Dec. 26—I rose this morning at my usual hour with the one engrossing thought in possession of my soul—my loneliness, my utter desolation.

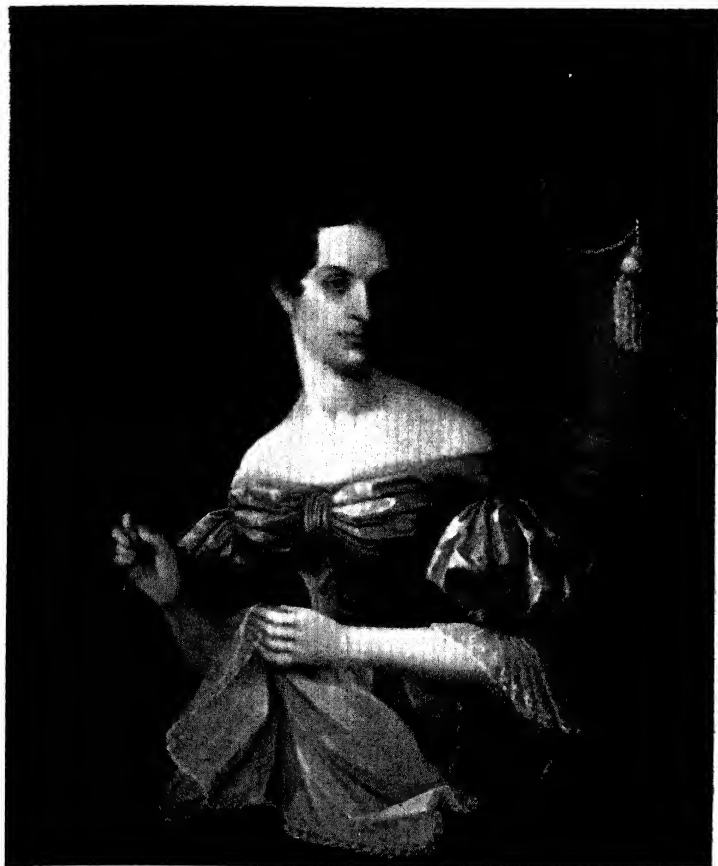
Dec. 27—I rose this morning with a heavy heart. I had been dreaming of accompanying my dear wife to church and I awoke to the mournful conviction that never more should we walk to the house of God in company, or take sweet counsel together. . . .

Dec. 30—Toward evening, I went to the graveyard. The rain and snow were falling fast and the northwest wind blew

chill. . . . It was a melancholy evening but it harmonized with my own feelings. I felt a sad pleasure in standing once more at the spot where her mortal remains were deposited. I offered up a silent prayer to God for more conformity to his will, and reluctantly turned my steps homeward.

New Years Day, usually a day of gladness, was a day of deepest gloom. Everything reminded the afflicted man of the past, of his "Kitty," who the year before on this holiday in joyous mood had put her present for him, a gold pencil case, into the toe of his boot, which he found on pulling it on. The gift was marked *Pensez a moi*. How little she then thought what occasion he would have to remember her within one brief year.

A dolorous winter followed. Salmon Portland Chase plunged into work, studying far into the night by the light of two large candles that were well burned down in the sockets by morning. His flaxen-haired baby became his chief joy, and her health his chief concern. For her sake he took up the study of medicine, but the "barbarous jargon" made progress slow. He considered engaging a special physician for little Kitty, Dr. Eberle, author of a recent book on the care of children. Mrs. Garniss objected, and Mr. Chase lost control of his tongue, and as quickly repented. "When shall I learn to subdue all hastiness of temper, when shall I be imbued with a humble spirit?" he asks himself. His mind dwells on his departed wife both day and night. Her portrait that an artist friend painted from memory of Catherine Garniss Chase was hung upon the wall, a graceful figure in gold-colored satin with *point d'Alencon* lace. Her slender hand holds a bit of filmy fancy-work. A face full of sweetness and character, suited to become idealized and worshipped as a saint.



CATHERINE GARNISS CHASE

From a painting owned by The Chase National Bank of the City of  
New York



With the coming of Spring, Mr. Chase moved his family out into the country to the Clifton Farm on the Lower Road, as it was called. His sisters, Helen and Alice, acted as housekeepers, both of whom were devoted to their brother. Mr. and Mrs. Garniss unwilling to be torn away from their only grandchild, spent much time at the farm, a not agreeable combination of personalities, since Mrs. Garniss was a high-handed woman, and Mr. Chase a high-spirited man. He endured the thorn in his flesh, as a means of grace, and became subdued. His inflammable nature that had once prompted thrashing a driver who was beating his horse, and that once threw a man down the office stairs, who had made an offensive remark, now came under the remarkable control that distinguished Salmon Portland Chase throughout life.

During the fall of 1839 the Chase family was split. The young widower had decided to marry again. Sister Helen, too, was about to leave with the same objective in view. She stayed, however, until the change of domiciles was arranged and the Garniss in-laws were informed that their son-in-law was taking a house in town for the winter. The Madame accepted the news better than was anticipated, agreeing that the "separation of the families would be for the happiness of all concerned." In September, the second marriage of Salmon Portland Chase took place. The bride, Eliza Ann Smith, daughter of Edmund C. (deceased) and Mary Smith, clients of Mr. Chase, was a young girl of seventeen, pretty, pliable, and pious. A friend congratulated the groom on winning "Cincinnati's Brightest Gem" adding the wish that the "blessings of God cluster around the ingle-side." The peace and joy of the young

couple was brief. During the following winter Little Kitty aged four and a half was stricken with scarlet fever and died. Three months later, Eliza's first child was born.

For a number of days before the expected event, Mr. Chase remained closely at home, "not willing to be absent from wife in her condition." August 12, at the close of the day, when Eliza's travail began, the husband sent for the physician, the nurse, Eliza's mother, and Mrs. Bell, his partner's wife. He then went into the next room.

I went apart and kneeling down prayed God to support and comfort my dear wife, to preserve the life of the child, and save both from sin. I went once or twice into the room where my suffering wife lay, and, occasionally whispered to her words of consolation. She bore her pain with great fortitude, and I believe was strengthened by her Heavenly Father to endure. At length, after full trial of her patience, by a protracted labor of four hours a little daughter was born. Mrs. Bell came to announce the tidings to me. But lying in the next room, I had heard the pleased exclamation of the kind physician, when all was safely over. After awhile I went into the room. The birth had taken place at 2 o'clock A.M. on the 13th. After I had seen my wife and child I went into the Library.

He recorded the birth in the big Bible and made memoranda of the event in his Journal. The name of the babe had been decided. It was to be the name of his first wife and his first child, Catherine Jane. This privilege was assumed, without discussion, and with no unpleasant wrangling. If the small Eliza, on this day of the birth of her first born felt an instinctive twinge of jealousy towards her predecessor, the regal Catherine, she doubtless made no sign. Wives in 1840 had infinite power of silence.



## II

### EARLY SET

Born August 13, 1840, at 2 A.M., Catherine Jane Chase, second daughter of S. P. C. and E. A. C.

The child is pronounced pretty. I think it quite otherwise. It is, however, well formed and I am thankful. May God give the child a good understanding that she may keep his commandments.

After I had seen my wife and child, I went into the library and read a few pages in Eberle's book on children—a judicious treatise. At last I became tired, and though it was still day, lay down and slept awhile.

**T**HUS the father wrote down the record of the advent of Kate Chase, his dominant daughter. With dogmatic denial of beauty he stresses mental and moral qualities as being all essential. In this estimate is revealed the Puritan's standard of perfection: not beauty but intelligence and goodness made up the requisites of the ideal woman. As a gift from God, the child was accepted as a sacred charge the parents were made responsible for. Salmon Portland Chase was not one to shirk his duty in the care and training of his daughter.

He took down from his bookcase *Children* by Dr. Eberle and read: "There is no period of life in which there is so great susceptibility to injurious influences as during the early stages of infancy"—of course, referring only to material conditions, as dress, feeding, exercise, but not to mental environment. The psychol-

ogy of childhood had not been dreamed of. Mothers' books were unheard of. The father was to be the arbiter of the child's education.

For two or more generations, education with the Chase clan had been the *summum bonum* of this earthly life, even as religion was recognized to be the *open sesame* of the heavenly existence. Salmon Chase, lawyer and scholar of Cincinnati, now was given the task of molding and fashioning the clay which God had given him. Little did he see the difficulties bound up in his labor of love. Even less could he have recognized that in this helpless babe was enfolded the embryo of a personality so dominant as to become his lodestar.

On this 13th day of August, Anno Domini 1840, he saw simply a well-formed baby. Long supple limbs, tiny hands and feet, deep eyes of uncertain color with long curling lashes, red-gold hair over a well contoured head—in all, an ideal cherub—except for the nose. The sculptor must have been napping when it came to the last stroke of the chisel, for he gave the babe a hasty dab of a nose, commonly known as a “stub,” more elegantly named *retroussé*. Long years after, so tradition says, when Nature did not correct this defect, Kate herself with the help of a plastic surgeon of France undertook the correction. As a small girl, the saucy little turned-up nose only added to her facial piquancy.

The Chase folk lore is full of picturesque individuals. First, the founder of the New England branch, Captain Aquilla Chase, that defier of the blue-laws, who on coming home from a long voyage found the garden peas ripe for the pot, permitted his wife to gather and cook them on the Sabbath Day, and was ever after

disgraced in the parish and soon departed therefrom. Allace Corbett Chase who with her husband and their young sons trekked from Boston through the wilderness of the Connecticut Valley and settled Cornish, New Hampshire, where she later gave birth to the first white child of that community. Jannette Balloch, doughty Scotchwoman of inquiring mind, who in seeking to learn the mysteries of Masonic rites by listening on the floor above to a meeting of the order, accidentally let her foot slip through the floor, to the consternation of her husband, Alexander, and the solemn conclave below. She was Kate's great-grandmother. From this daring Scotchwoman, Kate drew both physical strength and dauntless courage in stepping over the strict lines of feminine restraint.

The babe, Kate the Second, appears to have been endowed with innate vitality—"uneasy & restless" from the first day of her life. The mother, Eliza Ann, did not recover her wonted strength. She wilted under the exhausting heat of late summer, and in September, when Katie was less than a month old, they were taken to a favorite health resort, Yellow Springs, Ohio, returning in late autumn to meet the rigors of a midwestern winter. On Christmas Day, Eliza on the arm of her husband walked to church service, and afterwards to a friend's home for dinner. She contracted a severe cold which she could not throw off, the forerunner of the dread white plague, consumption, which for five years drove her here and there in search of health. Naturally, Kate accompanied her mother.

Now it was a summer at the Springs, with a daily drive behind a spanking team. One day they were run away with, but luckily neither Katie nor her mother

was injured. Now it was a visit with relatives in New England, with a stop-over in New York at the Astor House. Now, a winter in New Orleans. Everywhere, Katie was admired. At the age of three she was becoming something of a personage, charming, smart, and unafraid of strangers. Universally, she won the admiration of her father's friends, among them the former Atty.-General. Charles H. Haven writes (Nov. 11, '43) to Chase: "Mr. Wirt sends his love to all your family. I have elicited from *him* that Katy loves him—this perplexes me!" At three and a half years, Katie had acquired an insatiable appetite for the sweets of adoration. "Funny Kate! she desires love," wrote Mrs. Hamilton Smith of Louisville to Mrs. Chase. Excess of tenderness had too early aroused erotic impulses that cried out for satisfaction.

Katy already was the center of her circle, with the traits of an only child, though other babies came into the Chase family. Two tiny daughters were born but died a few months after birth, no doubt of the same disease that was consuming the mother. That Kate survived seems a miracle in the face of continual kissing—kisses delivered in person and by mail. Rarely was there an affectionate postscript missing from her parents' letters—"a hundred kisses for sweet little Kate."

Small wonder that she grew into a spirited, self-willed child. Her mother was too weak and her father too busy to discipline her. Only once does he make note of restraining his daughter—then nearly three years of age. She was obstreperous during morning prayers. He wrote: "Read after dressing, a Psalm—the fiftieth, and first four chapters of Matthew. Some earnestness in prayer—was obliged to correct my dear little Kate—

prayed with her." To pray with her and to reason with her were his only means of correction.

During December '44, Eliza Ann Chase in a desperate trial of nature cure, that was then first being advocated, made a driving tour through Ohio, with her brother, Edmund Custis Smith, who was a sufferer from the same disease as his sister. New Year's Eve he wrote his brother-in-law to report that the two invalids had had "a pleasant ride to Lebanon where we had a pleasant room but rather large and cold for Lizzie but in every other respect comfortable." The "hardening process" was not conducive to poor little Eliza's well being. By the next spring the wife's condition was so precarious as to demand her husband's constant attendance upon her, and the entire family started off on a journey East.

Mr. Chase left his office business in charge of his partner, and his farm under the supervision of his law clerk, who was commissioned to report frequently the condition of affairs. At the foot of the letter, special messages were sent to the "bonny Kate" with an added scrap of farmyard news.

Give my love and a kiss beside to *the Kate*. Tell her that I saw the chickens yesterday—they are growing so fast that they will soon be hens, and so she must look out for other pets. They were growing very tall, and are getting their white dresses very dirty. Then they were *fighting with each other!* The kitten is very well and does not look very sorry because her young mistress is away. She is getting over it, I guess.

And again:

Tell Kate that her kitty is growing fast and is quite well. She was so glad to see me last night as to *get up a waltz* for my benefit (valgrisé chasing her tail) and at the tea table ensconced herself in my lap, resolved that her nose should

bear my spoon company in my cup of tea. Translate these important facts into Kate's more graphic English. After her Delaware<sup>1</sup> description of the springs, I surrender to her superior aptness of expression.

We may be assured that at the age of five years, Miss Kate had learned to read and write, and without doubt was fluent in conversation and repartee. She was a lusty lass. But as a travelling companion to her sick mother, Katie must have been exhausting. Though at first the wife seemed to improve a little, travel was found to be of no benefit to her, and early in August Mr. Chase returned home with her to the Farm. Here, late in September, Eliza Chase died, leaving, of the three daughters she had borne, only the first, Catherine Jane, aged five.

"Poor little Kate, she does not know how great a loss she has sustained," wrote one. Another letter of condolence sent Mr. Chase at this time from his friend Haven reminds the bereaved man of the small daughter: "The link that connects you to all that was interesting and lovely in the mother . . . is yet spared to you in the person of dear little Katey. She will become the pride and blessing of your existence." A true prophecy.

Again, a second time, Salmon P. Chase turned away from a wife's grave with a small child as his chief comfort. Again, the hand of God, as he believed, had been laid heavily upon him. A second portrait was hung upon the wall.<sup>2</sup> He accepted the chastisement with the meekness of the afflicted patriarch of old whose sufferings, as the Chase journal records, offered spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Delaware, Ohio.

<sup>2</sup> A girlish form robed in a gown of puffed gray satin; a fair young face in quaint old-fashioned bonnet.

relief. He scourges his soul because he suffers little sense of sinfulness. Morning and evening Bible readings and prayer were invariably observed both summer and winter. Two months after Eliza's death the master of the house wrote:

I resume my journal after a long interruption, during which the saddest of afflictions has fallen upon me. . . . This day has been marked by no extraordinary events: rose, as usual, of late, before sunrise, breakfasted with Sister Alice and Little Kate—read Scriptures (Job) to little Kate who listened and seemed to be pleased, probably with the solemn rhythm for she certainly can understand very little; then prayed with her; then to town in omnibus, unshaven for want of time . . . —to Truman's bookstore where bo't series of little books for little Kate . . . home in omnibus—heard little Kate read a little poem—also in Bible—

Through the outlines of the day's program one can visualize the picture of the Chase farmhouse that severe winter of '45 and '46.

By candlelight, we see Aunt Alice dressing the five-year-old Katie ready to take her place at the breakfast table—in red flannel underwear, home-knit stockings, calfskin shoes, and calico pinafore—the regulation dress for every day wear. Impatient, and with a not too happy countenance, we fancy, she sat through the reading of a number of chapters, followed by a lengthy prayer, held by the father's deep sonorous voice. When she became rebellious under this religious regimentation, he gently reproved her, reasoned and prayed with her. Though the logic of the argument was lost upon her, the impress of the loving tenderness in the voice carried. She was the object of her father's solicitude, his chief distraction from sorrow and worry. The evenings were a solace to him and to her a delight, when she had

his undivided attention. After a "comfortable supper," a "delightful chat & play with dear little Kate," he heard her read; then she was tucked in bed, and he worked over law cases and wrote in his journal.

A dismal winter at the Clifton Farm on the Lower Road. Sickness, death, funerals, were of almost daily occurrence in the City. Mr. Chase was far from well, yet with Spartan courage he kept up his daily routine, with more anxiety for Katie's health than his own.

Sat. Nov. 29—Have not written for several days—feel this eve rather unwell & disinclined to journalize, but will put down a few things—very cold weather, thermometer day before yesterday before sunrise 10 degrees above zero—yesterday morning 14—this morning about the same—breakfasted  $\frac{1}{4}$  past seven . . . to town in omnibus . . . walked home . . . tea—prayers with family—very thankful for continued blessings—heard little Kate read Bible as usual—she very well for which I thank God—

Three days later the father suffered a slight stroke, caused, as he thought, by the painful reminder of Kitty's death, six years before.

Dec. 2—I wrote nothing on Sunday or Monday night because I felt too much indisposed: on (account) of Saml. Lewis' child at his house on Broadway he is said to have been a very bright child, just turned of six years—only two months younger than my dear little Kate, and destroyed by the same dread disease, the scarlet fever. During the night, Sunday, I was quite ill & much alarmed by my symptoms—sinking faintness, palpitation, violent shaking—Dear Sister Alice wrapped me up warm—made a fire in my room & gave me hot drink & after a while I got better. . . .

The next morning the sick man was in town attending to business. His finances were giving him worry. With his substantial real estate holdings he was far from being a poor man, though mortgage encumbrance cut



down the attorney's income. Debts had been constantly accumulating. Eliza's physician, Dr. Worcester, was as yet unpaid. The summer before her death Chase wrote his partner: "This journey will be, I suppose, pretty expensive, and with the improvements I am obliged to keep in progress will keep me very short, as I see no prospect of any considerable office income just now. I shall trust you to finance me."<sup>3</sup>

Another year, and Chase had decided to take unto himself a third wife. Fourteen months after the death of Katie's mother, he married Sarah Bella Dunlop Ludlow, granddaughter of Israel Ludlow, one of the founders of Cincinnati. This young lady of twenty-five years was a client. After the death of the father, James C. Ludlow, through the business of settling the estate, the attorney was thrown often into the company of the heirs. Just as with the Smith brother and sister of Eliza who as minors were under the attorney's guardianship, so again with the Ludlow children, Chase assumed oversight of their financial business and the personal welfare of the wife's younger sisters and brothers, and thereafter had full management of the estate. Though originally an extensive property, a large amount had been sold to pay the debts of the father, thus bringing the individual shares down to approximately \$12,000. With the marriage of their eldest sister, the Ludlow

<sup>3</sup> Getting up before sunrise on a winter morning the strenuous pietist wrote in his journal before family prayers: "Monday I was in town. I devoted most of my time to stating an account of my debts, which (were) more than I expected. I thought I had reduced them to about \$9000 but find them to exceed \$11000—to bed after prayers & rather restless night. Very cold this morning . . . 8 above zero—to town in sleigh omnibus busied chiefly as yesterday but a good deal interrupted . . . heard dear little Kate read verses, & bible, & pray: talked to her—read conclusion of Job."

children quite naturally looked upon Mr. Chase in the double capacity of brother and father.

The descent of a new set of in-laws upon the Chase home with latch-string privileges gave little Miss Chase some disquietude. From birth Katie had sensed freedom of speech and action. Her ego had expanded, her will had taken solid root. She accepted as her right the center front of the picture, since all fixed their eyes upon her and deferred to her wishes. Suddenly she was forced into the background. . . . She suffered a sense of bafflement. Rebellion and jealousy were aroused. She now must share her father's love with another. The child was resentful of this strange lady who must be called Mother, and who demanded obedience. The crisis came in the Chase home after a succession of depressing events in the community, sickness, death and funerals, a series of melancholy episodes sufficient to lower the morale of grown-ups themselves. Dr. Nathan Worcester had died, followed a few days later by Katie's uncle, Edmund Smith. The Chase Journal thus records a lugubrious Sabbath:

April 25—In the city at church. Mr. G. on selfishness—unprofitable—dinner at Judge McLean's. Attended funeral in afternoon—many present. This evening little Kate disobeyed her stepmother & made untrue representation; admonished her & promised to punish her, if I cd not otherwise induce her to amend.

To the Puritan parent, "untrue representation" was close kin to wicked lying, both prompted by the Evil One. Though up to this day, Katie had been spared the welfare of the wife's younger sisters and brother and rod, in the future, admonishment was to be supplemented by chastisement.

Soon after this unhappy Sabbath day, Chase concluded that Katie must be sent away to school, though she was very young to be tumbled out of the home nest. Through these seven years of her life he himself had watched over her development. During the brief evenings when he was free he had taught her to read and write and recite verses. A selfish little princess, she had accepted her father's devotion as a divine right—he was her king. Now the situation was changed. The wife rightfully demanded her husband's society, and moreover other children might naturally be expected. In fact, the early autumn of this same year, 1847, a baby girl, named Jannette Ralston after Mr. Chase's mother, was born to Sarah Ludlow Chase.

Shortly after that event, Miss Kate, aged seven summers, had her simple wardrobe packed and with her father as escort started East. The young miss, no doubt, was elated by the prospect of entering a fashionable school in New York City. A friend of her father's had recommended to him one kept by Miss Haines, who had opened her home to a few "young ladies" in lower New York, where Kate would be properly cared for, as Mr. Chase was assured.

It was a long journey to New York either by the southern route via Philadelphia, or the northern, via Buffalo. As the Liberty Convention was meeting at the latter city that Fall, the chosen route was through the Miami Canal to Lake Erie. At Lockport, Uncle Edward and Aunt Eliza Chase were living. Katie might visit them while her father attended the political meeting. Outside his family, politics was Chase's supreme interest, and Katie early with her keen, quick wit caught the surface significance of what the Liberty Party stood

for, the destruction of slavery. She knew the stories of Matilda and John Van Zandt <sup>4</sup> as what child of the city did not, and her heart had been stirred by the escape of many a persecuted Negro from the slave hunt. She carried in her acquisitive mind many a thrilling tale to relate to her schoolmates in New York.

<sup>4</sup> Escaped slaves whom Chase defended.

### III

#### FRIEND OF FREEDOM

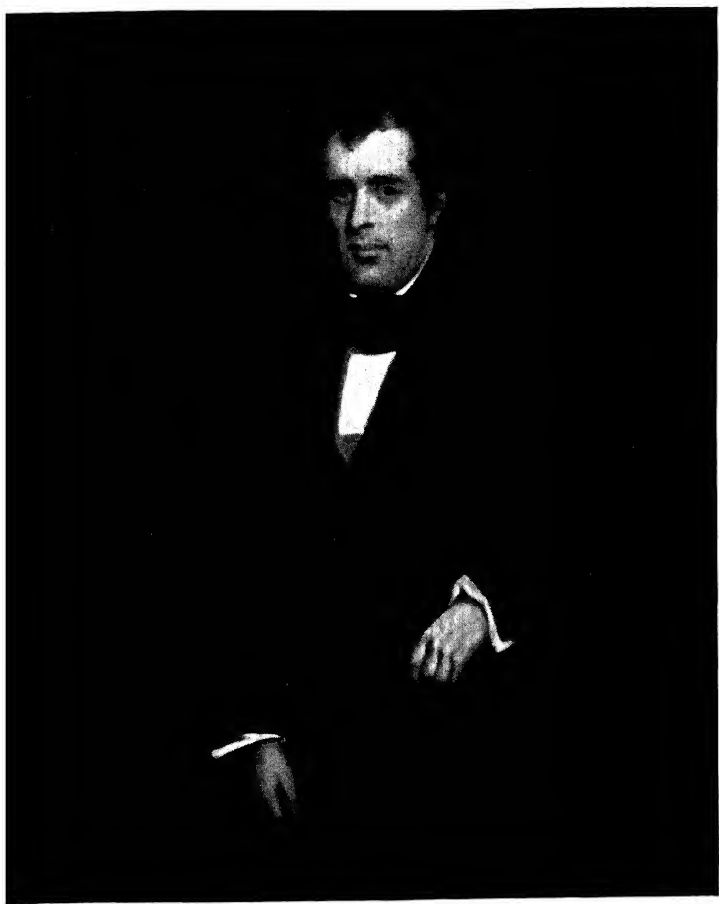
**F**ROM the day of his reaching man's estate, Chase had identified himself with the anti-slavery cause. His first political act had been the signing of a petition to prohibit slavery in the District of Columbia. As a resident of Washington City, he had first-hand knowledge of the evils of trafficking in human merchandise, since there he saw a notorious slave market. When he came to Cincinnati, he could hardly have realized that here he was to come up against hard repercussions while fighting to maintain his moral convictions on the subject of slavery. Although Ohio was a free state, still, the majority of its residents,—in Cincinnati, at least,—were sympathetic towards the slave-power across the river in Kentucky.

While building up his clientele, young Chase, inflexible as the granite of his native state, occupied his time in the writing of the history of Ohio and its statutes. Through this labor he discovered the so-called Black Laws that had blotted the name of the State from its entrance into the Union. In this free Ohio, Negroes and mulattoes were excluded from voting; they were forbidden to testify in the courtroom against a white man, even to corroborate his testimony. The black man had no educational privileges though he paid taxes. Harboring a fugitive slave was a penal offense.

Chase was poor and he had his reputation to make,

his practice to establish, yet he hesitated not an hour to take his stand for the Negro and against the slave interests already well entrenched in the rapidly growing city. An incident soon occurred to furnish a test of the stamina of this hard-willed, kind-hearted New Englander. James Birney came to Cincinnati to establish the first anti-slavery newspaper there, the *Philanthropist*. Birney's printing office was raided and he barely escaped with his life; that, only through the courage of Chase, who took his stand in the doorway of the Franklin House and prevented the mob from entering. "Who are you?" contemptuously asked one. The ringleader threatened with, "You will suffer for this." Chase retorted coolly, "I can be found any time," and the mob moved away. A few days later, an abolition meeting was held and the cause went forward. But Chase did not subscribe to its extreme doctrine. "Although not technically an abolitionist," he said, "I became a decided opponent of Slavery and the slave-power."

What was his political party? was asked. He claimed to be a Democrat in principle, professing belief in States' Rights and the Strict Construction of the Jeffersonian School. Chase was opposed to the extension of slavery in the territories. "No slavery outside of slave states," he said. "Make it a living reality, and slavery is denationalized." In this moderate position he stood alone. To the Abolitionists he did not go far enough and to the Whigs and Democrats he went too far. He himself was as puzzled as his fellow citizens to know where he did belong. Whenever the presidential year rolled round he was forced to make his choice of candidates; the rest of the time he consorted with anti-



SALMON P. CHASE

From a painting owned by The Chase National Bank of the City of  
New York





slavery men of all shades and stripes. Meantime, he was making his name as a defender of Negroes.

The young attorney specialized upon Fugitive Slave cases, giving his services for a little or nothing—usually nothing. Once when passing out of the court-room after making his plea for the despised race, a prominent citizen turned to a friend and said, "There goes a young man who has just ruined himself." When abused by the press he declared, "I am only one of the people—altogether, I fear, too unfashionable, but I speak my honest convictions and nothing else." As time passed and his fame spread over the country, calls for his legal assistance came from various sections. October, 1844, he received a request to go out to Iowa to defend runaway slaves. In February, 1845, word was sent to him from New Orleans that a colored woman with her two babes were taking boat north to Cincinnati, hoping for the protection of Mr. Chase. He was dubbed derisively the Nigger Lawyer. At home among the colored population he was beloved. He boldly preached freedom to them, saying directly, "The moment the law excludes a portion of the community from its equal regard, it divides the community in higher and lower classes and introduces all the evils of the aristocratic principle."

Of all his many cases in behalf of the Negro and his freedom, none gained the attorney the fame that redounded to the crusader through the Van Zandt case,<sup>1</sup> a story of high dramatic interest.

On April 22, 1842, nine slaves landed on the Ohio side of the river. They had escaped from one Wharton Jones, their owner in Kentucky. Van Zandt, a free negro, originally a Kentuckian turned abolitionist, had kept the Underground

<sup>1</sup> Van Zandt gave Mrs. Stowe the original of Van Trompe in Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Railroad Station through which many escaped slaves were carried to freedom into the northern states. Van Zandt now an old man was at this time raising and selling garden products. One morning, he started from his home in Walnut Hills for his small farm. When a little way out, he was met by the party of escaping slaves, who begged his help in getting them safely on their way north. Van Zandt took them into the covered wagon and drove along. They were waylaid by "two bold villains" who carried off the slaves and returned them to Kentucky, all save one, Andrew by name, who jumped from the driver's seat and ran away and never was found.

Mr. Chase prosecuted for abduction and lost the suit. Other lawyers over the country offered assistance, William H. Seward for one. More as a protest than in expectation of receiving earnest consideration, Chase presented an exhaustive and learned brief of twenty-seven thousand words to the Supreme Court of the United States. The opening lines strike the depth of his unselfish motive of action:

Oppressed and borne down by the painful consciousness that the principles and positions which it will be my duty to maintain, can derive no credit whatever from the reputation of the advocate; I have spared no pains in gathering around them whatever authority and argument the most careful research and the most deliberate reflection could supply. I have sought instruction wherever I could find it. I have looked in the reported decisions of almost all the State Courts, and of this court; examined and compared state legislature and federal; above all I have consulted the Constitution of the Union and the history of its formation and adoption.

The case was lost but also gained, since it won to the cause of freedom many advocates, and for Chase himself the praise and gratitude of many men, black and white.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Storey said of the argument, "It is a tri-

<sup>2</sup> The colored people of Cincinnati presented the attorney with a silver pitcher which he used for many years as an official punchbowl for lemonade.

umph of freedom." Charles Sumner wrote congratulations to the Cincinnati lawyer, who in reply told the sad sequel of the old Negro's life:

I saw poor Van Zandt a day or two ago. He came into town in his wagon, and sent up his son to ask me to come down to him, as he was unable to get up stairs to my office. He was very weak. Pulmonary disease had made sad work with his hardy frame. . . . I said to him that I could hardly suppose that, in view of his approaching end, he could feel any regret for having aided the fugitives whose appeal to his compassion had brought him into his present troubles. The old man's eyes lighted up as he answered "No; if a single word could restore the man who escaped and save me from all sacrifice I would not utter it." And such I believe is the universal spirit of those who have aided the oppressed in regaining their freedom.

Politically, the Negro defender was steadily broadening his connections and crystallizing his convictions. When he first came to Cincinnati, he had called himself a Free Democrat, though his first presidential vote was cast for the Henry Clay Republicans; in 1836, he was reckoned as a Harrison Whig; in 1840, an out-and-out Whig. Harrison was a neighbor of Chase, and he felt some obligation on that score; moreover, he hoped Harrison would take a stand for freedom. But when after one month's administration, Harrison died and Tyler became president, Chase then broke sharply away from the old parties and cast his lot unreservedly with the Liberty Party, determined to make it a do-something party, resting solidly upon law as well as principle. This was the year that Kate Chase was born. For the next ten years, her father devoted himself more unreservedly to the anti-slavery cause than he did to his own law practice, which he largely delegated to his partners and law students in his office.

Chase was an efficient organizer. In June, 1842, he called the Southern and Western Liberty Convention at Cincinnati, to which 2,000 delegates responded. He wrote scores of letters to liberty lovers of the land, appealing to anti-slavery old-line party men, with the hope of drawing them into the new organization—at least during presidential election year. When the National Convention met at Buffalo to select candidates, Chase drafted the platform and it was accepted, with the added clause injected by the abolitionists making the fugitive slave law null and void because not binding in conscience. Chase argued the law was *illegal*, therefore not binding, but he was overborne by the extremists, and the clause was written in, for which he was to suffer in the future the reputation of being a fanatic.

Events were closing in around the Friends of Freedom to corral them into a closer group. In 1844 the question of the annexation of Texas with the danger of its becoming a slave state, was agitating the country. Lowell wrote his stirring poem, "The Present Crisis," as his contribution to the anti-slavery cause. To its sentiments Chase could give whole souled response:

Then to side with Truth is noble when we share her wretched  
 crust  
 Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to  
 be just.

With the increasing menace to the cause of freedom, the Ohio leader redoubled his exertions in organizing all available forces against the enemy. Chase sent out the call for the Southern and Western Liberty Convention held in Cincinnati June 11 and 12, 1845, a meeting designed to enlist the co-operation of all resolved to act

against slavery by speech, pen, and ballot. Two thousand delegates responded. Chase made the address of the occasion, which later was printed and distributed through 100,000 pamphlets. The opening paragraph sets forth the object of the meeting:

We are not a band of fanatics as some foolishly imagine and others slanderously assert, bent on the overthrow of all Government and all Religion. We are citizens of the United States, from the west and the southwest, some in slave states, some in free, to carry forward and perpetuate the individual, social and civil elements our fathers began. . . .

In contrast to the inconsistency between the doctrines and workings of the Democratic Party, the speaker set forth the character of the Liberty Party; as it founds itself upon the "great cardinal principles of true democracy and of true Christianity, the brotherhood of the Human Family." . . . "The Liberty Party of 1845 is, in truth, the Liberty Party of 1776 revived." In urging the old-line party men to join in a coalition against the slave power, he said, "We are ready to prove our devotion to our principles by co-operation with either of the two great American parties which will openly and honestly in State and national conventions, avow our doctrines and adopt our measures, until slavery shall be overthrown." The orator pressed on towards his conclusion with strong persuasion.

With Jefferson we tremble for our country when we 'remember that God is just, and that his justice cannot sleep forever.' We would not invade the Constitution; but we would have the Constitution construed and administered according to its true sense and spirit. . . . To compromise for any particular temporary advantage is ruin in our cause. We are resolved to go forward, knowing that our cause is just, trusting in God.

With this final word, the leader closed his powerful document that was to make many adherents to the band of the Friends of Freedom. Nevertheless, nothing of a practical nature could be accomplished without coalition with the old established parties. For the Liberty men to put forward a candidate, at this time, Chase considered worse than futile. October, 1846, he wrote:

What I am willing to give up is names, separate organization, what I am not willing to give up is Principle & Consistent action both with reference to men & measures. . . . If I were a whig in the whig party & believed that by the action of that party power could be most speedily achieved I would act with and in that party supporting however for office only anti-slavery men. If I were a Democrat in the Democrat party, & entertained the same belief as to that party as above stated in regard to the whig party I would act with and in the democratic party supporting however for office only anti-slavery men.

Chase demanded the integration of all anti-slavery elements, a fusion of all Friends of Freedom.

"Why cannot the Friends of Freedom stand together?" he wrote Charles Sumner.<sup>3</sup> "Is not the question of Freedom paramount, and is it not great enough in itself and its connexions for a party to stand on?" Sumner was a Whig and an Abolitionist, Chase a Democrat and Liberty man. July, '47, the Ohio man wrote, "For myself I sympathize strongly with the Democratic Party in almost everything except its submission to slaveholding leadership and dictum. I cannot abide the crack of the whip, but if the Democratic Party takes independent ground, and follows boldly the lead of its own principles, then I am willing to give to its nomina-

<sup>3</sup> Nov. 26, 1846.

tions my humble support." On the subject of his own name being used on the Liberty ticket as vice-presidential nominee, he writes at this time:

If however it shall become necessary for the Liberty Men to nominate Candidates as a distinct party and—what seems to me very improbable—the contingency should arise that the friends of freedom deem it wisest and best to have my name upon the ticket, I should hardly feel at liberty to withhold it. I should however even then, consult my own sense of duty and be guided I trust by its admonitions.

This, it is noted, was the first time he was approached for the use of his name on the national ticket, an invitation to be repeated several times during the succeeding twenty years of his life and to be answered virtually in the same terms.

Early in 1848, Chase led off in calling a Convention of Free Democrats to nominate—"if they do not"—after the adjournment of the old-line parties a Free Territory candidate. When asked his choice, he wrote Sumner in August: "For myself I am well content with Hale—any fit man who will represent our views and concentrate a larger suffrage, if any can, for Freedom, Free Territories and Free Labor." Earlier that summer, Chase sent a pressing invitation to Senator Hale<sup>4</sup> to visit Ohio, who refused on the ground that Mrs. Hale was fearful of trusting her husband to the dangers of the unknown western wilds. Mr. Chase then wrote including the wife in the invitation.

I can appreciate Mrs. Hale's unwillingness to trust you out here in the West; for if we once get you among us, you will find it very difficult to get away. Still I hope that you will come and bring her with you also. Mrs. Chase whose grandfather was one of the original proprietors of Cincinnati and

<sup>4</sup> John Parker Hale of New Hampshire.

who herself was born in Missouri, and has never been east of Columbus, will be very glad to make proof of the qualities of western hospitality.

We hear nothing more of the proposed visit. We do know that Hale took Chase's advice to withdraw his name as presidential candidate of the Free Soil Party, which met at Buffalo, August 9 and 10. In preparation for the National Free Soil Convention, the untiring organizer had prepared the Circular and obtained the signatures—the calls were returned with 3,000 names. Finally he wrote the keynote speech which he had been asked to deliver, and read it aloud to his wife.

The People's Convention was made up of delegates of many men of many minds: Whigs and Democrats, Barn-burners, and other rag-tags of disaffected partisans:—Van Buren, with his New York Barn-burners thirsting for revenge for his defeat in '44, now bent on defeating the regular Democratic candidate, Cass, rather more than the defeat of slavery; Samuel J. Tilden, brilliant and adroit politician, hater of the Hunkers.<sup>5</sup> For the first time, Chase and Tilden met, and here was aroused the spark of that envious hatred the New York man cherished through life for the Ohio leader, a hatred that, some twenty years afterwards, so disastrously wrecked both their political anticipations.

Chase was the dominating spirit of the Convention. He presided over the nomination, and together with Charles Francis Adams drew up the declarations of the platform, a compromise granted the Liberty men in return for allowing the New York men to name the candidate. Benjamin F. Butler made a speech in favor

<sup>5</sup> Hunkers, a faction of Democracy in the State of New York opposed to the more radical Barnburners, opposed all slavery agitation, were so called because of their alleged *hankering* for office.



of Martin Van Buren, and he was chosen. Though the Free Soil nominee was defeated on election day,<sup>6</sup> the anti-slavery party succeeded in sending four of its advocates to the United States Senate the following year. Chase was one of the number. He accepted the honor for the sake of the Cause of Freedom which had absorbed his mind and heart these many years, yet history has written him down as a man burning with unholy ambition and love of power. One hears even today, sixty years after his death, the accusation of his having connived for his own gain, when in 1848 he promoted the formation of the Free Soil Party in the hope of riding into the presidency on its back. The truth is quite the reverse. It is true that he had a normal desire to push ahead and be "First," but his reformer's zeal took precedence over his personal ambition. He was only forty years of age, and already had a national reputation.

<sup>6</sup> In 1848, the Free Soil candidate received 250,000 votes as against 70,000 given the Liberty Party candidate in 1844, and 7,000 in 1840.

## IV

### SENATOR CHASE

JANUARY, 1849, was a critical month for Salmon Portland Chase. His election to the United States Senate was hanging in the balance. While his friend Stanley Mathews, then Clerk of the House at Columbus, was fighting the Chase battle, the Cincinnati lawyer was occupying himself preparing a bill for the repeal of the Black Laws, including the foundation of separate schools for colored children. Of his own political ambition he said at this time: "Most willingly would I forego every hope of personal distinction if I could secure the adoption of the great principles of Right, Justice and Humanity for which we are contending, by retiring myself to complete obscurity, recognized of none but a few friends and God." And again, "I do not *seek* any office—much less do I *claim* any. I do not even desire any however elevated or honorable in which, while discharging faithfully its general duties, I cannot promote the cause of Free Democracy."

Chase was elected <sup>1</sup> by the fusion of Free-soilers and Democrats of various stripes. Whigs of whatever shade refused to support him because, as they alleged, his election had been brought about by a sly piece of Yankee bargaining, a swapping of votes by which two young Democrats were to enter the state Legislature,

<sup>1</sup> February 22.

provided Chase went to the national Senate. This piece of political dickering precipitated a barrage of obloquy against Senator-elect Chase, not to be silenced until the end of his term. With inner assurance that no one had been wronged, and that the result justified the means, he went on his way trusting that his character would clear itself, satisfied that what was done "in the way of martial coöperation" was "*right*" and would be attended by the "happiest consequences to the great cause" to which the last eight years of his life had been devoted. At times he thought of publishing an exposition of his position and action in connection with the election, but was withheld, as he ironically remarked, by the same motive that silenced Lyman Beecher in a similar situation. The absent-minded preacher, one evening walking home in the twilight, saw an unusual looking animal on the roadside and heaved a ponderous volume at it, and had the compliment returned with compound interest, teaching the Doctor never to throw quarto volumes at a skunk.

By choice a family man, Chase never was more contented than before his own hearthside; yet circumstances constantly were depriving him of domestic joy. One only recorded happy evening at the Farm stands out as exceptional. He had just returned from a business trip upstate. His wife had written him "a pleasant scolding letter" in which she expressed the wish to know when he would be back, as she was waiting for him before having a "professional consultation" with her physician.<sup>2</sup> He had wired her at once and started back, arriving after a fatiguing night ride—to find "all well &

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Chase's second babe was born the coming summer.

all glad to see me.”<sup>3</sup> In the evening he wrote his friend Hamlin, editor of the anti-slavery paper in Columbus:

I have had my supper; I have donned my dressing gown & slippers; my wife is beside me in our snug dining room; everything is comfortable around me; and I am writing to a friend in whom I repose full confidence. At this moment I cannot find it in my heart to indulge in a single unkindly or uncharitable thought towards any human being.

Such pictures of serene, untroubled domesticity in the Chase home are all too rare; not because of marital disharmony but the demon Disease that prowled about the Clifton Farm on the Lower Road. Sarah Ludlow Chase, a woman of much dignity and character, entertained towards her husband not only tender affection but the desire to share his life and lend her assistance to his public career. Already, connection with this prominent Cincinnati family had given the attorney added prestige. John McLean, uncle of Mrs. Chase, at whose house her marriage was celebrated, was Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Washington was a familiar, if personally unknown place to the young wife, a place suggestive of the most stimulating social attractions. She was desirous of spending the winter there, and her husband shared in this desire. The uncertainty of Mrs. Chase's health was the chief deterrent. From the time of her first child's birth, Janet Ralston, the mother had symptoms of the then "fashionable disease," consumption, in its first stages known as pulmonary trouble; and after the birth of the second babe the trouble became more pronounced.

Chase took the oath of office in the Senate in March. Thinking that a change of climate would be beneficial

<sup>3</sup> Katie was one of the "all," since she had arrived home for a vacation a few days before.

to her, Mrs. Chase accompanied her husband to Washington in the Fall. But almost immediately upon her arrival she became alarmingly ill, and he decided to take her to a hydropathic establishment near Philadelphia. They started just before Christmas. An anxious holiday season followed. He constantly administered to her comfort in every way possible, never leaving her side except for her own sake. His hopes and fears alternated from day to day. At first she seemed to mend daily, then came a sudden change for the worse which filled him with dismay; then she rallied again and he "hung between hope and despair." On the day he left her to return to the Capital she seemed better than at any time since they had left there. Ten days later, he was back again at her bedside, after an all-night's journey. The physician in charge of the invalid assured her husband that there was no lesion of the lungs, a report which heartened him greatly but did not lift the weight of anxiety. To add to his depression, word came to him of the death of a sister. In writing to Charles Sumner at this time, he said:

You ask for word of cheer. The response must come from a sad heart. I have just heard the tidings of death of a beloved sister—a kinder, sweeter, more affectionate heart never yearned towards a brother. My wife is still very ill; but I hope is mending slowly. I fear her constitution will never recover wholly. What a vale of misery this world is. To me it has been emphatically so. Death has pursued me incessantly ever since I was 25. My path has been—how terribly true it is—through the region of his shadow. Sometimes I feel as if I could give—as if I *must* give up. And then after all I rise and press on. Have you ever experienced these feelings? I should faint certainly if I did not believe that God in his mercy as well as wisdom orders all things well, and will not suffer those who trust in Him through Christ to be utterly cast down.

Early in June Mrs. Chase was removed to New England, to a "delightful retreat for invalids" at Round Hill, Northampton. Still there was no surcease of sorrow for the parents. The babe, Josephine Ludlow, aged one year, was laid under the sod, and the health of the mother gave "intense solicitude." In writing a letter of condolence to Sumner on learning of the death of his sister, Chase wrote:

I have been taught the great lesson sympathy in the school of bereavement. Often and often has the blow fallen upon me—so often indeed that now, at length, I live like Damocles, with a visible sword over my head.

Under these untoward circumstances naturally public life was irksome to him. Gladly would he have relinquished the duties and distinctions to others. "But I seem to have no choice. So few are faithful to Freedom—so few seem to have any real heartiness in the service of the country—that I feel as if it would be criminal in me to think of retiring." From his entrance into the Senate, the Ohio man of forty-one years felt his inability to cope with the difficult situation, first because of personal qualities which he felt would be "sadly" in his way; second, because of his lack of legislative experience. His sole reliance in the coming conflict he provisioned lay before him was his devotion to the Cause. He registered this vow: "I will be faithful to the Free Soil cause, and according to the measure of my discretion and ability will labor to advance it."

Senator Chase enrolled as a Democrat, with the belief that this old-line party was in "process of regeneration" and would prove itself "in truth and earnest a free democracy." But if, on the contrary, it should renew "an unnatural alliance with the Slave-holding Oli-

garchy" then with God's help the Crusader would go straight on in his old course "whether with few or many," bearing his pennant, "No Nationalized Slavery," "No more compromise with Freedom." Thus without fear and without reproach the warrior knight went forth to battle with the Dragon.

A fighter of the power and persistence of Chase was one to fear; to the Whigs a dangerous radical, to the Democrats an extreme fanatic. After much discussion the old-line caucus thinking to disarm him by neglect excluded him from all committees. At the opening of the Thirty-first Congress, December 18, 1849, preceding the election of the chairmen of the committees, Chase protested against the injustice of debarring the Free Soil men and giving special recognition to Southern senators. He said on the floor, "If gentlemen here think proper not to array themselves with either of these parties, it is due at least to them to have a voice in the organization of committees." He was without redress and was forced to accept the will of the majority. With a grim courage he took his position, and that almost alone. Of course, Hale stood ready to second Chase's moves, though his genial, joking manner towards the opponents largely nullified his influence. "Hale is a glorious fellow," said Chase, "but he is too offhand." Then, too, there was William H. Seward, a Free Soil colleague, but between him and Chase there was little coöperation. Of him Chase said, "I don't know what Seward will do. I have never been able to establish much sympathy between us. He is too much of a politician for me." So Chase had to brave the whole Senate.

The supreme ordeal of being ignored by his antagonists and in turn taunted as a fanatic tried the Fighter's

soul. Yet so calmly did he take abuse as to give the idea of callous indifference. One described him in the Senate as the "target for attacks, but keenest shafts made no more impression than musket balls on hide of rhinoceros." <sup>4</sup>

January, 1850.—The trumpet sounded to bring the knights into the field. Butler of South Carolina, who had won a place on seven different committees, and Chase, who had been blackballed from all, opened the tourney with a slight tilt. Butler had introduced a bill to provide for the return of runaway slaves, a project Chase was prepared to assail with vigor. To strike at his personal integrity was the only recourse. The following dialogue was carried on between the South Carolina and the Ohio senators. Butler: "A senator on this floor has openly said in a resolution he would feel at liberty under mental reservation to regard the fugitive slave law as null and void," to which Chase flashed back, "To whom does the senator allude?" And Butler retorted, "To the Senator himself and to the resolution introduced by him in a convention held in 1843." Chase was quick in denial of the charge. "Mr. President, I never proposed such a resolution. I never would propose or vote for such." Butler countered, "It is attributed to the Senator . . . if newspapers are to be relied upon." Chase with a touch of derision, "I suspect that if the Senator relies upon no better authority than newspapers he will find himself often misinformed." A little laughter at this parry brought back a sniping shot from the Southerner. "I should hardly have supposed such a remark would come from one connected with news-

<sup>4</sup> Poore, Benjamin Perley.



papers.”<sup>5</sup> . . . At the conclusion of Butler’s speech, Chase got the floor. “I have been referred to in a manner which makes it proper for me to say a word or two—” Butler (interposing): “The statement to which I referred came to me from an Ohio paper . . . I will hand it to the Senator before he begins his remarks.” But Chase was not to be shut off.

I know no reason why a particular Senator should be singled out upon this floor for a special exhibition of his personal opinions and views . . . [more] than other senators who have advantage of prompt and powerful party support. The senator from S. C. thought proper the other day to bring before the Senate a letter written by myself, & now the same senator has seen fit to introduce here a newspaper attributing to me a certain resolution. Mr. President, I wrote that letter to the late speaker of the House of Representatives of my State. I did not expect its publication. I was made to say that the free democracy was sometimes “sectional.” I did not say that—I hold no views which I deem sectional unless opinions of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison were sectional also . . . for every position which I maintain is fortified by their authority. . . . I hold no doctrines of mental reservation. Every man in my judgment should say precisely what he means—keeping nothing back here or elsewhere. I should like, sir, to see every man maintain here the same position which he maintains at home.

With this subtle stroke Chase sat down. Not to let the matter rest there, Butler was on his feet with, “I hope the paragraph which has been referred to will be read,” to which Chase responded, “Let it be read.” The clerk read the paragraph. Senator Mason addressed the Senator from Ohio. “Can the honorable Senator inform me whether the resolution was offered and passed at a meeting convened at his instance?”

<sup>5</sup> Evident reference to Birney’s *Philanthropist*, perhaps also to other anti-slavery organs Chase helped support.

Though questioning the propriety of being put upon the witness stand, Chase answered that the resolution was introduced and passed at a Convention at Buffalo, a mass convention of the Liberty Party. "I was a member of the committee on resolutions. It was opposed by me, afterwards introduced to the convention when I was absent and adopted." Here the speaker takes occasion to defend the character of the anti-slavery group: "A body of purer men was never assembled in political action—men who had honesty enough to speak as they meant and courage enough to act as they resolved." Here was a pharisee, a hated abolitionist, calling out from the housetops, I am better than thou, which a few days later brought forth a taunt from Senator Foote of Mississippi: "Some (senators) assume to themselves an excellence, under the professions of a high morality that I will not say they deserve." It was plain that Salmon P. Chase was to suffer for the virtues as well as the sins of his party. They were all to be bunched into one cell and labelled dangerous agitators, contemptible abolitionists, narrow fanatics.

The battle was on. All the great war horses were there: Calhoun, Clay, Webster, chafing at the bit to plunge into the fray and save their country from disruption. Calhoun, full of hate, denounced the North, the "encroachments of the North" he had "long labored faithfully to repress." Turning towards the Vice President, the Southern patriarch uttered the familiar threat of an impending crisis: "Sir, what the South will do is not for me to say. They will meet it, Sir, in my opinion as it ought to be met." When the young Ohio Senator got the floor, he replied in quiet, dispassionate tone that the path to an amicable solution of the difficulty lay

not through crimination and recrimination; still, firmly declaring that "no intimation of the probability of disunion" would move the Free Soil senators from the path they felt forced to pursue. "The Senator from S.C. tells us he trusts the South will meet the crisis as it ought to be met. Well, sir, I must say that I concur in that hope. And how ought such a crisis to be met? I trust for one that whenever this crisis arises it will be met in the spirit of the fathers of the republic;"—the Union cemented and an example of freedom given to the nations of the earth. This, the maiden speech of Chase, he characterized as "an offhand affair by way of feeling my way. It stirred up the Senators wonderfully." They were just getting a hint of the mettle of the Independent Democrat.

Peace was the cry of the Compromisers, following the inauguration message of General Taylor: "Peace, plenty, and contentment reign throughout our borders, and our beloved country presents a sublime moral spectacle to the world," words designed to allay fears. Chief among the peace criers and compromisers was Henry Clay, now in his 73rd year, still a magnetic figure. Though wasted with consumption, the slender, graceful form, with the seductive smile and voice of gentle persuasiveness held the audience with hypnotic appeal. Chase as a young man had known the famous Kentuckian for many years. Clay remembered the Washington pedagogue as a harmless classicist; he now had to reckon with him as a tough-sinewed brother senator, who while advocating peace would not give an inch to compromise. Clay wished to weaken the younger man's position by throwing him into the extreme Left. The

following dialogue between them was carried on during the slavery debate:

Clay: Mr. President, I am perfectly aware of the infinite variety of abolitionists. I have not yet heard the Senator (Chase) disavow abolitionism.

Chase: I do not know what the Senator means by the term.

Clay: Disunion abolitionism.

Chase: If he by that epithet intends to designate that class of persons of whom I say I am one, who wish to maintain the Union but not to allow slavery within the sphere of the exclusive jurisdiction of the National Government, then I am doubtless an abolitionist. But if by that term he intends only to describe those who would break up the Union or interfere with the State legislatures by which slavery is maintained within State limits, I do not acknowledge its applicability to me.

Senator Chase's judicial attitude towards the subject at issue put him in a class by himself. He was biding his time to face the man with a million worshippers. On February 5 and 6, Henry Clay spoke on his Compromise Resolutions embodying the plan for avoidance of disunion: California to come in unrestricted as to slavery; territories either to introduce or to prohibit slavery; Texas line to be fixed north of Rio del Norte; slavery to continue in the District of Columbia. In strong terms the old fighter declared for non-extension of slavery: "No earthly power will ever make me vote to spread slavery over territory where it does not exist." In the debate that followed the young Jefferson Davis spoke. Stephen A. Douglas decried the exclusion of slavery from California and stood for the insertion into the Constitution of "the right to exclude or allow slavery"—a phrase Chase would not tolerate. Reams of petitions from anti-slavery citizens over the country came into

the Senate Chamber until, like gnats, they caused irritation.

Chase was keeping his dignified silence, while Friends of Freedom were anxiously waiting for their spokesman to speak out. Sumner in Boston was prodding his friend into action. Chase replied: "I have been endeavoring to get the floor lately, but have not succeeded as yet. I am only beginning to feel at home." A spasm of stage fright and inferiority gripped him: "How I wish that someone occupied my place more able to satisfy expectations of Friends of Freedom and the obligations of the Crisis. Never in my life did I so painfully feel my incompetency as now. May God help me!" A few days later Senator Chase delivered his speech, *Union and Freedom Without Compromise*—"under great disadvantages" as he himself put it.<sup>6</sup> He began: "I rise in unaffected diffidence . . . I speak from no eminence to command attention. I claim only that consideration due to sincerity of belief, directness of purpose, and to whatever force of argument I may be able to bring to the support of my position."

With this modest introduction, the speaker enunciated his basic principle on the constitutionality of slavery: "We have no power to legislate on the subject of slavery in the States. We have power to prevent its extension." Finally, he reviewed the history of slavery in this country, the controversy between the South and the North, said to have been begun in 1820 when the Missouri Compromise was made. "It began two hundred years before when the Dutch ship came up the

<sup>6</sup> "On the days which fell to me, the 1st and 2nd, scenes between Benton and Foote occurred which so engaged the attention of everybody that I had hardly any chance of attention: and in fact, received not much—some however listened attentively."

James bringing a boat load of slaves and at the same time, the Pilgrims came to Plymouth Bay and planted Freedom." He cited the acts of legislation against what Jefferson called the "infamous practice of slavery"; and called attention to the clause reprobating slavery which was inserted and later expunged from the Declaration of Independence. He touched upon the cession of the Northwest Territory with Jefferson's plan for its control—"that after the year 1800 neither slavery nor involuntary servitude should prevail"—a proviso defeated by minority vote. "Read the Monument to Jefferson in the great Northwest," said the disciple of the Great Democrat.

Senator Chase then took up in order the Clay Resolutions: First, on the admission of California, "As a Western man I should have preferred the erection of two States instead of one"; on a proposal to appoint a Committee of Thirteen to devise a plan of slavery settlement, he "expects no good to come"; on the Texas boundary and debt, there was nothing to be said since "Texas is here"; on the continuance of the slave market in Washington he was strongly set against it. He would give no vote to perpetuate wrongs, "to tear fathers, mothers, children, from their homes and each other in Maryland and Virginia and transport them to markets of Louisiana and Mississippi." On the persistent tampering with the Constitution by legislation and resolution, "we have had too much." The constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Law he denied: "A State which imprisons without pretense of crime the citizen of another State cannot demand with a good grace surrender of fugitives." "We are not prepared to give sanction to the bill which authorizes and requires appointment of 261

commissioners and an indefinite number of other officers to catch runaway slaves in the State of Ohio; which punishes humanity as a crime; which authorizes seizure without process of trial with jury and consignment to slavery beyond limits of one state without opportunity of defence, and upon *ex parte* testimony. Certainly no such bill can receive my vote." The Free Democrat had made explicit his position on the burning topic of the time, slavery. He might well have gained the respect of his peers, yet he received small recognition from the Senate leaders, who whenever possible blocked his efforts. The political lines were being more tightly drawn, as Chase recognized: "The issue is being made up of Democracy *vs.* Aristocracy. In the Senate Henry Clay and Lewis Cass lead, under General Foote, the Aristocratic Party."

On June 3rd, the Fugitive Slave Bill was presented by Daniel Webster, Chairman of Territories, and discussion continued throughout the heated season. To protest and make objections, present petitions, and amendments that were overwhelmingly lost had been the daily experience of the two uncompromising senators, who for many months had anticipated their defeat. After their last abortive effort to postpone the evil day by stalling action on the Fugitive Slave Amendment, the Senate approved the measure September 18, 1850. Ten days before the vote was taken, Senator Chase recognized that the battle was over, when he wrote a friend. "Clouds and darkness are upon us at present. The slave-holders have succeeded beyond their wildest hopes twelve months ago. Well, what now! I say with blind Milton, 'Bate no jot of Heart or hope but still bear up and steer right onward.' "

With the passing out from the Senate, a year later, of John P. Hale, Chase lost a genial, loyal friend. Another staunch anti-slavery warrior came to take his place in the unequal conflict, the junior senator from Massachusetts, Charles Sumner, cultured to the finger tips, and ardent in reformer's zeal. This wealthy, self-assured, and travelled gentleman gave the poor provincial Chase a depressing sense of inferiority. Yet the two were twin-minded and united in aim, the Damon and Pythias of the Capital City. When they appeared together in society, both well over six feet in height, dressed alike in dark blue broadcloth coats with brass buttons, white waistcoats and black trousers, they gained the reputation of being the two handsomest men in Washington. Not often, however, did they go into society. Usually, their evenings were spent in keeping up their heavy correspondence, with reading, and preparing material for the furtherance of the Cause to which they were devoted.

Charles Sumner took his seat in the Senate, December 1, 1851, the day Henry Clay made his last speech. Clay died seven months later. Calhoun was already dead. As the arrogant Bostonian entered, Benton, the *Pater Senatus*, remarked to him patronizingly, "You have come upon the stage too late, sir. Our great men have passed away, the great issues are settled," a sentiment the zealous devotee could not accept. For a few months he remained silent, perhaps taking Seward's advice against the use of "retorted scorn." When he did speak he had the audience hating him, though they listened sullenly to the golden-tongued oratory and sat spellbound before the inspired fire from his soul. "Do you hear that man?" asked Stephen A. Douglas, pacing



back and forth in front of the Chamber, to a senator friend. "Do you hear that man? He may be a fool, but I tell you that man has pluck to say these things to the men who are scowling around him."

Towards the end of the 32nd Congress which adjourned August 31, 1852, Sumner threw a stick of dynamite into the Senate by presenting his bill for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law, passed two years previously. He spoke continuously for three and one half hours. In conclusion he said: "The slave act violates the Constitution and shocks the public conscience. By the Supreme Law . . . by the Constitution . . . I am bound to disobey this act. Pains and penalties I will endure; but this great wrong I will not do." . . . He cites a parallel incident in the life of Saint Francis Xavier, and in closing, he pleads: "Be inspired by the example of Washington. He admonished by these words of Oriental piety—'Beware of the groans of wounded souls. Oppress not to the utmost a single heart; for a solitary sigh has power to upset a whole world.'" With these last words he closed.

Malefic reaction came from all sides. Clemens of Alabama urged his colleagues to treat the Sumner speech with absolute silence, adding that "the ravings of a maniac may sometimes be dangerous, but the barking of a puppy never did any harm." Badger of North Carolina termed the speech the most extraordinary in the history of the Senate, "an elaborate oration, carefully written, studied, committed to memory, and interspersed with curious quotations from modern learning and ancient lore." Sumner was charged with deliberately holding up the business of the last days of the Session in an effort to bring about a discussion of

the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law, and Douglas accused the Massachusetts man of "purposeful infidelity" to the Constitution. Chase was instantly on his feet to face the leonine Douglas:

Mr. President, the Senator from Ill. has made a very serious charge against those who propose to vote for the amendment of the Senator from Mass.—infidelity—deliberate and purposeful infidelity—to the Constitution we have sworn to support. Sir, I repel the charge. I deny it in its letter, and in its spirit. . . . It was a noble vindication of that great charter of government from the perverseness of the fugitive slave act.

To the censure that his brother senator should have spoken at all, at this time, Chase retorted:

Weeks ago he asked the Senate to consider resolutions which he had laid upon your table that he might submit his views. Then we were not pressed with business. Then we adjourned over Saturdays. Yet the Senate refused his request. I never before knew the courtesy of hearing refused to a senator under similar circumstances.

The President interposed with, "I think the Senator is mistaken." Chase continued,

The Chair corrects me. I only state my own recollection . . . you refused an ordinary courtesy of the Senate; that refusal constrained him to avail himself of his right as a Senator. I rejoice that he has done so. The country will hear and judge. Let those who condemn the speech answer the logic and falsify its history if they can. . . . The speech of my friend will make *an era* in American history.

A voice from Louisiana called out, "All we want now is peace," and Chase echoed the sentiment with, "May you have it and that speedily," and that that could not be until the Congress of the United States return to the original policy of the founders of the Republic . . . "Then we shall have peace." With no further debate the

measure was put to vote. Yeas four, nays forty-seven. Senator Sumner's mighty artillery had been dragged out without effect.

Throughout the succeeding year (1853) Chase and his comrade Sumner held their peace. In 1854, the Ohio man's last year of his service, the spirit of the Friends of Freedom rose to white heat; this, through the introduction of the prospective Nebraska Bill, sponsored by Stephen A. Douglas, Chairman of the Committee on Territories. The Little Giant now held undisputed title as commander-in-chief of the compromise forces. To meet the onslaught drew forth the most adroit maneuvering of Chase and Sumner. January 12, the Ohio Senator begged leave to present a memorial of certain New York gentlemen of note, praying for the prohibition of slavery in the Territories. "I am aware," he said, "that the Committee on Territories is opposed to the prayer of these memorials, so I move they be laid on the table; but I give notice that I shall hereafter submit a motion that the memorials be reported to a select committee." January 30, the Senate as Committee of the whole proceeded to the consideration of the bill to organize the Territory of Nebraska. With the passage of the bill, a vast region twelve times the size of Ohio might be overrun with slave labor. In the minds of Sumner and Chase, the implications of this measure were too awful and far-reaching for silence.

Together they framed a manifesto, arraiguing the bill as "a gross violation of a sacred pledge," an atrocious plot to convert boundless prairies into a "dreary region of despotism inhabited by masters and slaves." The title of the paper bespeaks Chase authorship: *Independent Democratic Address: Shall Slavery be Per-*

*mitted in Nebraska?* The style smacked strongly of Charles Sumner's ornate magniloquence. On the day of the publication of the Address in the *National Era* and three New York papers, Douglas presented his bill for discussion, postponed two weeks previously by him at the request of Chase—that time might be given to broadcast the Address among the Friends of Freedom over the country.

The stage was set for a dramatic scene in the Senate following the news of the circulated propaganda. Douglas entered the chamber with wrathful stride, fire glinting from his coal-black eyes. A great oratorical boxing match was in order. After formally addressing the Chair, he reminds the audience of the postponement of the debate upon his cherished Bill.

Sir, little did I suppose at the time that I granted that act of courtesy to those two senators that they had drafted and published to the world a document over their own signatures in which they arraigned me as guilty of a criminal betrayal of my trust, guilty of bad faith and engaged in an atrocious plot against the cause of free government—on that very morning, the *National Era*, the Abolition organ of this city contained the address signed by certain Abolition confederates in which the bill misrepresented the committee, grossly falsified our motives, our characters calumniated.

Douglas picks up the published copy of the Address and reads dramatically sentences designed to warn the Friends of Freedom of a threatened danger lurking in the Douglas favorite phrase 'squatter sovereignty'; "Pretenses . . . mere inventions . . . Servile demagogues may tell you that the Union can be maintained only by submitting to the demands of slavery"; . . . The speaker calls attention to the 'Postscript' of the Address in which he is mentioned by name. "The appeal

is made," he went on, "to the Legislatures of States, public meetings, ministers of the gospel to interfere and arrest the vile condition which is about to be consummated." . . . "The address bears date Sunday, January 22, 1854. On the holy Sabbath, the Abolition Confederates assemble for plotting."

Here, Chase attempts to speak but Douglas refuses to yield the floor. At the close of the indictment, however, the accused was given the opportunity of defending himself. He began in his accustomed restrained voice and manner, with a mild tang of irony:

Sir, I had some intimations of the debate which the Senator from Ill. has now pronounced. I was well aware that an assault was to be made. The Senator has paraded his battery; he has fired his guns; we have heard the noise; we are in the midst of the smoke; but nobody is hurt. We are all here; we yet survive; and I doubt not we shall long survive all such attacks.

With these sardonic words he opens his rebuttal. As to the alleged breaking of the Sabbath day in plotting the destruction of Douglas' character, he has not considered the impossibility of a document being prepared in Washington on a Sunday and published in New York, Monday morning. As to Senator Douglas being held up to scorn, guilty of crime, Chase said that "except in a brief note appended is the Senator mentioned at all. . . . He exaggerates his importance when he supposes that we had him rather than any other men of the committee especially in view." Then with scorching satire, the guns are turned on the enemy, The Little Giant.

Sir, I know the weight and importance which he possesses in the country; I know that he has a great and powerful

party surrounding him; and I know also the great disadvantages under which I enter into any controversy which he provokes. I am in a minority. I know that full well. It is no very pleasing position. But I dare do that which I should like to see the Senator also do. I dare adhere to principle even though that adherence must carry me into a minority. The Mass. Senator and myself are but two in a body of 62. We have not the sympathies of this body with us. But we can proudly challenge scrutiny of our action and defy the production of an instance in which we have been illiberal to those from whom we differ. . . . Why are we assailed? Because we deny the nationality of slavery. The Senator from Ill. thinks he can take advantage of his position in the country. . . . It is safe to attack opponents who stand, as we stand, without the supports he counts upon. Ay, sir, that shows courage, that shows high honor, that shows lofty manhood to assail the few and the unsupported. I tell the Senator from Ill. that we did not assail him. . . . We spoke of the bill. We said nothing about the character of the individuals who were its authors. . . . We confined ourselves . . . to the merits of the cause, and here in this Chamber, before this audience, I reaffirm every syllable of that appeal. I thank the Senator from Ill. for having brought it so prominently before the country. It will now reach thousands and tens of thousands who would not read it but for the discussion that has taken place here today.

Salmon Portland Chase had made his most notable effort on the Senate floor, delivered entirely from notes, and without oratorical pyrotechnics. He was steeled to do his best and he did "better than he thought he should." Writing to a friend later, he said: "I knew I could break down his position; but I did not expect to come so near satisfying myself and much less did I foresee the profound attention of the immense audience with and by which I was listened to."

He was now strong-sinewed and prepared to meet defeat. He bore himself with dignity and serenity knowing well that this his last combat as Senator was a

losing fight. Nevertheless, in vision he saw a new party forming, the Anti-Nebraska Party, the People's Party,<sup>7</sup> which he perhaps more than any other statesman was to create. He had at last abandoned wholly the Democratic Party. "They claim to be the Democracy—but the part of Hamlet omitted—the thing in name only—nothing more. They go no longer up to the Jerusalem of the true worship but have made for themselves calves at Bethel and Dan. They have abandoned the creed taught by Jefferson, the great apostle of the Democratic faith, and have hitched themselves to the teachings of the new political saints, St. Stephen and St. Franklin.<sup>8</sup> With these new leaders, instead of battling for equal rights and exact justice for all men they boldly march upon a crusade against Freedom."

<sup>7</sup> Finally named the Republican Party.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen A. Douglas and Franklin Pierce.

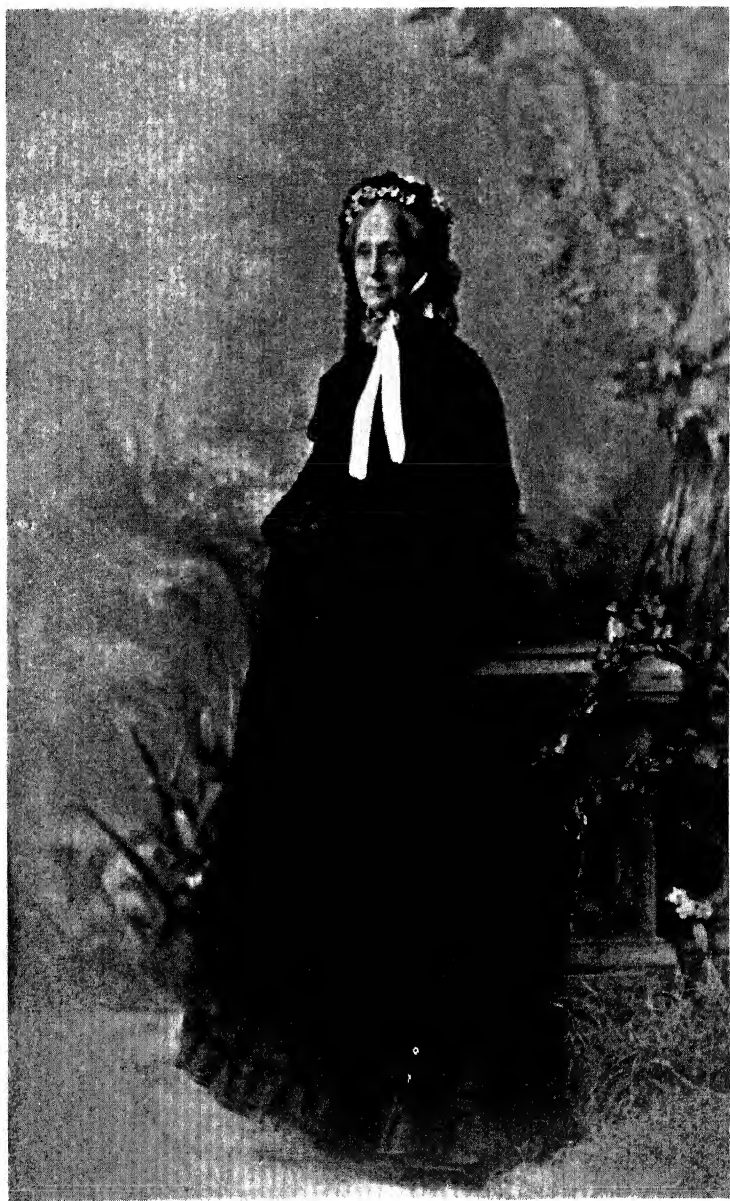
## V

### SCHOOL DAYS

NEW YORK'S first Red Book, the diminutive directory of 1844-45, lists Henrietta B. Haines, Tchr., 68 Warren Street. At this time, Miss Haines' private school was still within the city's educational zone, since Columbia College was in the neighborhood. The year 1847, however, which marks the date of Kate Chase's arrival in New York, saw this institution of higher learning moved from Park Place to 49th Street and Madison Avenue. Socially, many of the residents of the lower section were moving up to the Eighties and beginning to look down upon their friends in the vicinity of the Battery. Nevertheless, Warren Street still was eminently respectable.

After landing at the wharf, on the late afternoon of a quiet September day, as we surmise, slender little seven-year-old Katie Chase in simple frock and bonnet, which she already sensed as countrified and different from the city girls' style, stood in front of the ominous entrance door waiting to be ushered into Miss Haines' parlor. Katie was about to meet the woman who, more than any person who figured in the second period of the young girl's life, commanded awesome respect. Henrietta B. Haines outwardly was coldly severe, a typical nineteenth century spinster. She had not in the least the appearance of a novel's heroine, a Clarissa, for instance; yet she had had her romance, and been married





HENRIETTA B. HAINES



divorced within a year. A startling record this, one  
e sketched *sotto voce* by the mothers of her pupils  
whispered secretly by the young misses themselves.  
ster of a New Jersey governor, Miss Haines as a  
ig lady had been invited into fashionable society,  
her bent was towards religious activity; to be one  
ie army of missionary teachers was her great desire.  
n a party of her church friends, led by her rector,  
about to sail for the Far East, Henrietta begged  
with them, but was refused on the ground that she  
unmarried and unprotected, therefore ineligible. A  
ig man of the party offered himself as her husband.  
proposal was accepted, the ceremony performed,  
the young woman started on her sacrificial honey-  
n. After a torturing experience that well-nigh broke  
health and spirit, she returned home and opened a  
ll school. In after years it was known among her  
nate acquaintances that when her recreant one-time  
band was penniless and ill, many an evening, veiled  
lack, Miss Haines slipped out of her home to take  
ferry across the Hudson to care for him, returning  
next morning in time to open her school. Thus the  
na of romance clung to her.

i imagination we see the small Kate and her aus-  
father waiting in the polished mahogany furnished  
ving-room for the lady to come in. They hear her  
ending the long stairway, her taffeta gown rustling  
ly with every step. She was tall and thin, and  
sed as always in black with white linen collar and  
s. She halts at the door to give a recognizing glance  
er callers before advancing to greet them. Both  
er and daughter are nervous over the approaching  
rview with this distinguished personage.

Miss Henrietta B. Haines was Dignity incarnate. Yet withal she was gracious and kindly, without erring on the side of ultra-affability to make her guests feel at ease. Only after many years, and she an elderly lady under stress of hard times forced to ingratiate herself before clients, did Miss Haines deign to drop her mantle of reserve. Twenty-two years after Katie came to New York as a pupil, Miss Julia Newberry of Chicago describes her "awful pleasure" in meeting Miss Haines, who exhibited a most surprising sense of humor.<sup>1</sup> The years had mellowed her manners. On this September day in 1847, Miss Haines, we must believe, while conversing with the Liberty Party leader from Cincinnati indulged in no levity. It was a solemn conference.

Let us conjure up the scene. Miss Haines sits very straight on her high-backed chair, her aristocratic hands folded quietly in her lap. Her remarks, we fancy, in answer to Mr. Chase's queries run somewhat after this fashion:

"Certainly, it will be a pleasure to receive Miss Catherine as a member of the household. The boarders are from prominent families throughout the country, several from the South, with an equal number of day pupils from New York. . . . Assuredly, health and religion are of paramount importance. Church attendance? Ah, yes, St. George's on Stuyvesant Square is our place of worship. I conduct a Sunday School class there."

The punctilious Mr. Chase is satisfied that his Katie's character will be properly developed. Miss Haines pulls

<sup>1</sup> Miss H. was *supremely* gracious, & called me "my dear" all the time. She sat on the sofa & her eyes twinkled; she must have been very pretty; I made several original remarks that seemed to amuse her immensely.

a bell cord and a colored butler enters. "Tell Mademoiselle de Janon I would like her to come down." Almost immediately a small, smiling lady gowned in flowered brocade trimmed with lace and ribbons fluttered into the room. After introductions, Miss Haines turns to her young assistant.

"With Monsieur Chase's kind permission, I am putting Miss Catherine into your hands, Mlle. de Janon. You will share your room with her and be her *fond mere*, as she will be your affectionate *filie*, I trust."

Katie's heart is won by the petite French teacher who wears a pretty dress and is animated and jolly. Very shortly the adieux are said. Katie kisses her father good-bye and runs upstairs with her new governess, who gently chides the impetuous child. Miss Haines wishes her pupils to maintain a quiet walk and never run. With the disappearance of Katie and the Mademoiselle, Miss Haines turns to the father.

"Mr. Chase, your daughter is particularly favored in having Mlle. de Janon as governess. The child is too young to be left alone. Mademoiselle will look after her dress and personal habits. Miss Katie, you may be assured, will acquire perfection and fluency in the French tongue, together with a grace and sprightliness of manners for which foreigners from abroad are noted."

Thus was Katie Chase launched upon her cultural career. Cut loose from her early home environment, she fast acquired a self-sufficient independence. Separated from the one being she loved, her father, he now became her god, all wisdom and goodness. Naturally, the child suffered the pangs of home-sickness, but being a Chase, she bore the pain heroically and soon the

symptoms passed away, leaving her satisfied and happy in her school home among her young schoolmates. When the yearning for mother love came over her and she felt the loneliness of an orphan, as she sometimes did at nighttime, the sweet sympathetic Mademoiselle was near her to put her arms about the tiny Kate, her "Ma Petite," and speak cheery words. Christmas time was the hardest. Then she literally was a homeless waif, since her father must perforce spend his holidays with his invalid wife, wherever she was. To be sure, Katie had uncles and aunts a many, down in New England, and she was sure to be invited during winter vacation. But it was not like home. No place was home except where her adored father was.

Once in a long time, he made a journey from Washington to New York especially to see his darling Katie. Those were red-letter days. On one occasion, when prevented from coming as expected, the elegant Senator Sumner acted as his friend's substitute in escorting Miss Kate, which resulted in mutual admiration between the two, the hypercritical Bostonian and the alert little Miss Chase, whom he termed "very intelligent." This was high praise indeed from the censorious gentleman, and no doubt made the father very proud and glad to hear it. Summers when school was not in session, or the Senate either, father and daughter met at the old farm and became once more congenial pals. But always at the Clifton Farm on the Lower Road hung like a pall the cloud of sickness, the White Plague hovering as a shadowy Death Angel. Katie was glad to go back to the zestful rhythm of the school in jolly old New York.

New York furnished both a stimulus and an outlet

for Kate Chase's dynamic energy, her joy of life, her native spontaneity. The metropolis was the last word in social *éclat* and fashionable entertainment, that by contrast made Cincinnati appear like a backwoods settlement. In the late 40's, everything began to move with an increased tempo. Transportation was being speeded up. One could now travel from Manhattan to Boston in seven hours and five minutes! Astonishing record! So thought dear Colonel Hone. He was alarmed.

Flying is dangerous. I never open a newspaper that it does not contain some account of disasters and loss of life on railroads. They do a retail business in human slaughter whilst the wholesale trade is carried on (especially on the Western waters) by the steamboats.

Katie Chase in all her considerable travels by land and water had not yet been frightened by too great speed, and she had been on boats and railroad coaches from her birth.

Of Society with a big S, the keen-eyed little Miss Chase caught tempting glimpses while in Gotham, though at a distance and by hearsay. The older girls talked much of balls and beaux, and Kate drank it all in as she would a fairy story.

The Racket Court Ball—nothing more *recherché* since the last leap year . . . more than three hundred subscribers at ten dollars each . . . orchestra of thirty-five performers, delectable supper . . . pretty girls with pink dresses attended by young men with black mustaches and white vests. . . . In the gallery sat the Four Hundred—the De Peysters—the Van Rensselaers—the Vails. . . .

Some day, thought Kate, I will be giving balls and wearing pretty gowns. Her simple, home-made frocks

already she looked upon with contempt. But wait. The new Stewart store was an Aladdin Palace where one might gratify her least wish for finery, and soon Katie was allowed to exercise her choice in gown material, with a chaperone of course to keep account of every item. Papa Chase was most punctilious about having itemized accounts.

Her father, overfond of his motherless child, and too often unable to refuse her when she looked up at him with her appealing eyes, was strict in some matters and required good reports of Katie's studies and deportment. With her quick mind she learned easily, though with her impetuous nature persistent application was difficult. Still she was as studious as most of the young girls. At any rate, Mr. Chase returned Katie to the care of Miss Haines and Mlle. de Janon, year after year. Others of the pupils remained indefinitely, but hers was the longest record known—nine years.

The school flourished, and was moved up-town to exclusive Gramercy Park, Numbers Nine and Ten, and became fashionable. Mrs. Macaulay's school was the sole competitor. When her young ladies, in their afternoon walk, chanced to meet the Haines' girls on Fifth Avenue, ironic glances were exchanged. But the *Hainites* were loyal, and never, though they might live to forget all they had learned there, would they ever fail to think with pride of the school and recall vividly the daily program: the six o'clock rising bell, the breakfast of buttered bread, honey and *café au lait*, served by the colored butlers and presided over by Mlle. de Janon; prayers, and morning walk; opening exercises led by Miss Haines, when all sang together, then work



in the classrooms. Of the notable instructors, Dr. Ogden Doremus,<sup>2</sup> a tall young man with charming manner and musical voice, caused many a flutter in the hearts of the older girls; Dr. John Lord, the historian; Professor Guyot; Signor Caggiani, Italian exile who gave lessons in Virgil; Maria Jane McIntosh, who made the hated English grammar almost fun; Eliza Graetorey, who described the Oberammergau Passion Play and showed the sketches she had made while attending the religious drama. Piano, elocution, dancing, horseback riding, offered light variation from serious studies. Miss Kate was trained in all of these "extras," and became expert in the so-called "accomplishments." Particularly in dancing she was skilled, one of the Professor's star pupils. Cotillions, waltzes, polkas were the favorites.

Sometimes of a Saturday afternoon, Brower's omnibus was commissioned and the young ladies attended the Hippodrome, an exciting episode. On pleasant days they were often driven to the country, to what is now Central Park; and on very special invitation the school visited the Misses Warner at their island home up the Hudson, Susan and Anna Warner, authors of "Queechy" and "The Wide, Wide World." "Miss Susan," quaint in plaid silk with hair in long ringlets came to the school to correct compositions, and often assisted at the Thursday Night receptions, which were held to teach the young ladies how to appear in the drawing-room. All except the youngest of the pupils were allowed on these occasions. The story is still told how Ike Marvel was inspired to write "The Ice Cream Breakfast School" when as a guest of the evening, he learned of

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards Professor of Chemistry at the College of the City of New York.

the offered consolation given the tiny pupils by being promised ice cream the next morning.

Miss Haines' young ladies formed without question a proper line of miniature mannequins as they filed demurely down to the white marble hallway, each arrayed in her best frock: delaine, silk, or cashmere, with shirred bodice and full skirt; the older girls with a *basquine* of two flounces, and hair wreathed in artificial flowers. There in the broad doorway to the drawing-room stood the imperious presence, Miss Haines, in her black velvet evening dress, with real lace at neck and wrists, and beside her the guest of honor. Each little lady made her curtsy according to rule, then backed to her seat, there to hold her small body erect the entire evening, while she listened with respectful demeanor to the more or less notable speakers. Sometimes the audience had to be content with the mere spectacle, but often it was held in thrall by the stories related.

The most glamorous of all, perhaps, was that related by "The Lost Dauphin of France," pseudo son of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, who told of being spirited away to America during the Terror, and brought up with the Indians. As the Reverend Eleazer Williams he was touring the country and relating the incidents of his boyhood in France, his escape from prison, his transfer to this country, his life with the redmen; finally, and most exciting of all, the visit of Comte de Joinville, and his demand that Williams sign away all claim to the French throne. A narrative suited to stir the imagination of romantic adolescents. We surmise that Kate listened with eager eyes and straightway read again the

tragic tale of the young queen of the French Revolution.

But such speakers were the exception. Usually the guest of honor was a citizen of New York who spoke on prosaic themes. Cyrus Field, a near neighbor on Gramercy Park, sometimes came in to tell of his progress with the Atlantic cable. He predicted that soon the United States would be sending messages by wire to Europe—almost incredible.

Public entertainments were occasionally attended by Miss Haines and her private school. The young ladies went to hear the Wonderful Rachel recite: and they were permitted to see the French tragedian, Talma, though the theater as a rule was taboo, a restriction entirely approved by Mr. Chase, who classed the playhouse, the race track, the dance hall, and the gambling den in the same category, resorts owned and operated by the Prince of Evil. No member of his family might frequent them. Notwithstanding, Kate gently forced him to withdraw his rigid prohibitions. Before she had left the school in New York, he took her to the Opera with her chum, Kinnie Arnold—a concession indeed. When Jenny Lind “warbled her liquid notes” to a New York audience, Katie and her mates had seats near the stage in the Music Hall of Castle Garden, and after the program was ended, the Swedish Nightingale greeted them with smiles and a few gracious words. Another famous personage Kate was privileged to hear was the novelist Thackeray in his lectures on the “Georges.” Kate was becoming cultured in music and literature. To a still greater degree, she was acquiring social poise. She was learning to meet distinguished men

without being too frightened for words—if ever she was afflicted with social phobia.

Form and etiquette were essential acquirements. But in spite of this veneer of propriety the girls at Miss Haines' school underneath were natural youngsters, many of them madcaps, always eager for a frolic. And Kate, we must believe, was a ringleader. Springtime, when the magnolias bloomed in the Square, the spirit of adventure possessed them, though it was promptly suppressed. Once on a May evening, the sweet strains of Schubert's *Serenade* reached their ears from the street below, and instantly all were alert. A few of the bolder ones like Kate peeked through the curtained windows above and recognized Dodsworth's Band. Miss Haines likewise observed and brought the serenade to a close by dismissing the musicians with polite thanks for the favor.

The summer Kate was fifteen, she was well out of the angular "pig-tail" stage, in fact was a "young lady." Her figure was rounded into fullness. Her mirror reflected a fair complexion with dormantly passionate eyes suggestive of the storm and stress of adolescence. Her hair was "done up" in a coil at her neck, with a loosening of the rust-gold curls about her forehead. Miss Narcissus was not displeased with the picture. She was in love with herself. In the daguerreotype taken at this time, she wore a décolleté gown, with a silk stole held together at the bust by her little hand. A petulant droop to her willful mouth reminds one that Katie has been charged by her chaperone with the necessity of a young girl's being modest. Soon she will be free, to do as she pleases and dress as she pleases.

Kate Chase at fifteen had acquired the art of spend-

ing. She was inordinately fond of fine clothes. The spring of '55 she was outfitted for the summer. Mr. Chase must have been staggered by the expense account. Nearly one hundred items and all except a dozen were for personal adornment. Gowns aplenty:

24 yds of cross-barred muslin  
 18 yds of linen  
 Silk dress  
 Miss Wharton's bill for making dresses \$71.00  
 .....  
 4 pairs of boots and shoes \$11.00  
 .....  
 2 bonnets \$12.25

Almost numberless "findings" for the making of these voluminous skirted dresses, with incidentals, such as combs and watch-guard, parasol, pomatum, bows and arrows, et cetera, brought the sum total up to \$305.89. Katie had checked it up as her father required. "I have examined this bill and find everything correct. C. J. Chase."—signed with the sure stroke of a matron's endorsement. Yes, his daughter had really grown up, though to him she would always be his "little Katie." And he may well have murmured indulgently, "A daughter is an expensive luxury." To himself at least he was forced to acknowledge her extravagance; and while considering her faults, he could not blind himself to her excessive self-love, *amour propre*, as she euphemistically termed it. She was overly independent and heady as a young colt. If he were to admit the truth, Salmon Portland Chase was more than half afraid of his high-spirited, strong-willed daughter.

June, 1856, Catherine Jane Chase was graduated from Miss Haines School, Gramercy Park, New York City. Arrayed in much befrilled white muslin gowns, the

young ladies received their diplomas and the annual prizes of beautiful, imported books as rewards for scholarship. The graduates were "finished" and ready for life—so they thought. The cost of their education had been considerable. With Katie Chase, the regular tuition fees plus the extras, the amount expended equalled that of her inheritance from her mother's share in the Smith estate. With Mr. Chase's personal drain upon his resources during this period, he not infrequently had found himself embarrassed in meeting Katie's bills.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Seven years after Kate left Miss Haines' School, S. P. Chase sent the lady \$300 in check and a bank note of \$50, "duly credited to her account."

## VI

### THE GOVERNOR AND HIS DAUGHTER

SALMON PORTLAND CHASE'S Senate service ended March, 1856.<sup>1</sup> What next? In the fall of '54, when the majority of the people united in the movement against slavery, Chase's friends and adherents had wanted to bring him forward as presidential candidate, but they were few and not powerful enough to put it over. As always, he was fated to stand alone. His six years of Senate experience, a perpetual struggle to hold firm ground underneath his feet, had strengthened his moral muscle and hardened his will, assailed as he was from within the Upper House. Released into the world of men outside again, he was forced to defend himself against hostile calumny. Of his efforts in behalf of Freedom while in the Senate he said: "I labored incessantly to the uttermost of my ability to resist and arrest the greatest outrage of our generations, the ruthless subversion of that guarantee of Free Institutions which our Fathers had provided for the Northwest in the Missouri Prohibition."

Chase was acknowledged the most persistent and able defender of Freedom in the Mid-West, if not in the whole country. His propulsive spiritual power drove him forward in spite of personal antagonism against

<sup>1</sup> George Pugh a former law student in the Chase office in Cincinnati succeeded the elder man. Pugh had won his seat in the Ohio Legislature through the political dickering that won Chase his Senate seat.

him. He was nominated as Governor of Ohio and the attack was redoubled. Why, it is hard to conceive. He himself said, "I was never the enemy of these who pose as my enemies. There is nothing in my political life which I hesitate to submit to the closest scrutiny."

When the subject of the Governorship was broached to him by the leaders of the newly organized party, he had replied:

"As to the Governorship, you know my sentiments. I have declared them. An endorsement of my Senatorial course by the people of the State would gratify me, but as my actions in the Senate has the approval of my own conscience I can do very well without any other endorsement. . . . In other respects, reasons against being a candidate rather overbalance the reason for being one. Certain it is that I do not wish my name to be the cause of division among the sincere and earnest well wishers of the People's Movement." Of his sponsors he said, "Those who nominated me were composed of citizens of all organization, united by common determination to resist aggressions of Slave Power, especially to right the great wrong of the Missouri Restriction."

In the hope of defeating his election, his enemies dragged out old calumnies, which in the past he had refused to recognize, feeling that he might be "more profitably employed" and that he "would live them down," or if he died, that "Death the great revealer would bury these calumnies in my grave." But now, as the "representative of a great political organ I must speak." August 21, 1855, he spoke at a Republican mass meeting in Cincinnati. Here he met the charge of being an abolitionist, and of holding disunion sentiments, which by "repeating in every variety of intonation, our



opponents hope to scare full-grown men." He declared his position to be that of the Fathers of our Country:

Our National Government went into operation upon the principle of No Slavery Outside of Slave States—Slavery is local not National. Neither I nor any other Republican so far as I know proposes any interference with slavery in any State. If this is abolitionism then Washington, Jefferson, Henry, Madison, Adams, Franklin, were abolitionists. All longed for the time in which the whole land should be delivered from this great curse. Where they stood I stand. What they felt I feel. What they labored to accomplish I labor—but oh with what disproportionate energy and ability to accomplish—firmly resolved to resist the spread of slavery. If this is abolitionism, who of you is not an abolitionist?

Among the "reasons against being a candidate" for the governorship of Ohio was self-interest and his financial condition in 1855 and '56. His resources for ten years and more had been severely drained. While giving his undivided efforts to the cause of Freedom, his law practice had suffered neglect, delegated as it was to his partner and students in the office, for while Flamen Bell was an honest man, at times he was negligent. Chase himself was a poor business man. He held on to mortgaged real estate and renewed notes. "After twenty years of practice with net profit of \$20,000, he still was renewing his own paper."<sup>2</sup> Selfish consideration prompted refusal of political honors and the giving instead of his time and attention to his own private business. That Chase hesitated to accept the nomination was verified by his daughter many years later.

Katie as a girl in her early teens on her summer vacations at the Farm was accustomed to drive down to the office at the close of the day to get her father, who also was taking a holiday between sessions of Congress. This

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Benson Foraker.

alert girl became the confidante of her lonely father. She was familiar with his affairs and knew that he was in straitened circumstances. "We were poor. Lawyers' fees were not large. His firm received one big fee \$25,000 but our means were limited." The Governor's salary was small, only \$1,800, not including the residence. However, selfish interest gave way to public zeal. Chase was elected by a large majority, though defeated by his own county.<sup>3</sup> He accepted the difficult position, January, 1856, and during the coming months prepared to move his family to Columbus, the first Governor of the State to make his home at the Capital.

What manner of man was he, how changed since we first saw him stepping onto the wharf at Cincinnati twenty-five years before? He was now a middle-aged man, saddened and self-controlled. Continuous family illness had borne down upon his spirits in a depressing degree. His serious disposition by renewed sorrows had darkened his nature yet more. Throughout the first half of his Senate term, the frail wife was fighting the same disease that had afflicted Katie's mother.<sup>4</sup> Both died at the Clifton Farm on the Lower Road. Both left their first-born daughter. These two daughters of their father were to compose the principal interest of his life, around whom his deep affectional nature developed; and to whom he was passionately devoted. The cleavage from the Past was made clean-cut this year of 1856. New scenes, new interests, and new ambitions with young life, were to modify and brighten the atmosphere of the Chase home.

From his early manhood, a lover of the hearthstone,

<sup>3</sup> Because of his antislavery principles he was unable to carry Hamilton County, his home bailiwick.

<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Chase died Jan. 13, 1852, her husband's 44th birthday.

and in a sense homeless during the last six years, he longed for the comfort and peace of his own fireside. Kate was now sixteen and well trained to take her place as hostess, though the faithful sister, Alice Chase,<sup>5</sup> spinster, was still available as housekeeper. But this delicate, retiring woman quickly assumed a place in the shadow before the dazzling assurance of her niece, Catherine, who was quite willing to assume headship. A woman such as Alice Chase with ingrained New England thrift must have looked askance at Miss Kate's lavish management and sighed to herself over the unpaid grocer's bills, with an unspoken prophecy of financial disaster for Brother Salmon. Still, at the beginning of the Columbus residence, Alice took at least nominal charge of the ménage, while Kate, along with little Nettie, took up a superficial line of study at the "Institute." Drawing and painting were then the vogue among mid-Victorian maidens. Kate ordered a \$50. easel and no doubt splashed color to good effect; while her small sister was doing less showy but more effective work with pen and pencil, a skill that was to accrue in benefit to her own children, when as a mother she illustrated storyettes for them; and still later to the public when she became a promoter of art.

The early taste of the two Chase sisters is suggestive of the contrast in their natures. Kate was positive, intense, arresting; Janet, quiet, refined, retiring. When they came to live together in the same house continuously, they found themselves to be almost like strangers, for while Katie was at school in New York, Nettie was with her invalid mother and her Ludlow aunts. More-

<sup>5</sup> Alice Chase died February 17, 1859, from a heart attack, after returning from a church lecture. "Thus I have lost a dear and good sister," wrote Governor Chase. (Family Memoranda.)

over, there was seven years' difference in their ages, with a diverse background and training. To love one another, as their father desired them to do, was not easy. They had one bond in common, both had early lost their mother, having no more than the most shadowy memory of a pitiful wraith moving here and there in search of sunshine and strength. Both had been starved for mother love. If Katie now felt the stirrings of protective maternal instinct towards her small sister, as she afterwards evinced, at first it was aborted by jealousy towards the only one with whom Kate was forced to divide her father's affection. Kate at once began to "queen it" over little Nettie.

Kate Chase always and ever was the queen bee of the hive. She came to the Ohio Capital, a then way-out-west country town, bringing her French conversation and her New York wardrobe, and instantly became the subject of much and varied comment. The Columbus girls naturally were envious of this haughty stranger, the Governor's Daughter, who carried her head high and possessed speech and manners not readily copied. The mothers shared their daughters' envy towards this newcomer who paid little respect to years. As for the male youth of the town, Kate donned her armor of self-superiority. Her reaction to the adolescents of the opposite sex was perfectly normal for a girl who, up to the age of sixteen, had had little contact with boys of her own age. Kate had lived in a wholly feminine atmosphere. She now looked upon the ill-mannered cubs as being of an altogether inferior species from herself; and they upon discovering her attitude towards them, with the teasing instinct of youth, delighted in rousing Kate's ire. The Chase home being

near the High School, there were frequent conflicts between the more courageous of the knights and the defiant Kate.

One of the most doughty of the warriors, as an elderly gentleman, smiles as he relates the story of his combats with Kate the Shrew, consisting mostly in battles with sticks and stones over the back fence, accompanied with tongue lashings. "She was always on hand with missiles and words ready for use—the words were most deadly." But in spite of antagonisms, the embryo social leader had a large following in the neighborhood and used her organizing ability to form an amateur theatrical company. Creative force was seeking expression. Fond of dramatics she stood as playwright, star actor, and stage manager in one and the same production. Her friend, Mrs. Samuel Galloway, acted as patroness on these occasions, thus preserving the demands of etiquette—that all things should be done in proper style was essential to Kate Chase. Nevertheless, under the stress of an overpowering emotion she was known to forget the polite proprieties.

The story has come down that the Governor's Daughter was made secretary of a female benevolent organization, an incongruous position for the unregenerate Kate. Once at least she shocked the good ladies out of their pious complaisance, when as conservers of social morals they were giving a certain gallant in town their severe condemnation. Kate rose in her wrath in defense of the accused and turned fiercely upon the accusers. This young woman, half angel, half devil, was difficult to understand: her elegant demeanor on state occasions when her father was present, and her volcanic outbursts in smaller groups. The few now remaining in

Columbus who knew Kate Chase at this period of her life, look back with ripened understanding of this unusual girl, "who was ever a strange creature without close friends."

They gaze on her photographs and shake their heads disconsolately. "No likeness gives the least idea of her indefinable charm. We admired but feared her. Today, as we see Kate Chase in retrospect, we all are inclined to be very charitable in our judgments of her. She was a motherless girl. Her father was so occupied with his official duties that he neglected her and let her do as she pleased. Besides, her powerful mentality made it impossible for her to find her equals, so she naturally drifted." It is evident that Kate Chase's character was crystallized. Her high temper had been controlled only by the bit and bridle of forced obedience, not through the inner curb of her own will and conscience. And because of this, she would suffer lifelong injury from "running her head against stone walls"—as she put it in later years.

The humdrum routine of a provincial town offered few distractions for a young lady overflowing with love of life, the *élan vital*. In the absence of adequate stimuli towards natural falling in love in this romantic stage, her spontaneous emotion sought feeding from the spring of self-love. Nevertheless, Kate had more than a few escapades. One at least, gained her a spicy notoriety and lived long as a legend. Years afterwards, when she was maneuvering for the advancement of her father, maligning tongues pointed spitefully to her Columbus days with intent to besmirch her character. But it was an idle effort, for no evil beyond girlish skylarking could be proved against her.

There was in the town a gay blade, a married man, who came under the wand of Kate's witchery. He made calls upon the young beauty, and took her out driving behind his span of handsome bays. His wife, an exquisitely pretty woman, who loved him despite his philandering, often made occasion to call at the Galloways, opposite the Chase residence, and sitting at the window she would weep bitterly as she saw her husband walk up to the Governor's front door and be received by Mistress Kate, and a few minutes later hand her gallantly into the buggy and drive gaily off.

Main Street was agog with gossip, to which, however, Miss Chase gave no heed: she cared naught for public comment. After exhausting her interest in this pastime Kate dropped her flatterer, and turned to other diversions, with amoral indifference to the charge of "alienating affection." Kate Chase found small satisfaction in the activities of the *débutante*, whose chief occupation was waiting for Prince Charming while she sang sentimental songs in the twilight. Not that Kate was without her day-dreaming. Her fantasy life was interwoven with golden threads, in which her father's future was to be wrought. The present only occasionally caught her interest. "Not often," said she, "did I interfere with state affairs." But once at least, Kate's sympathy was roused. She herself tells the story.

A certain young man was imprisoned. I think for murder, and his wife, a young girl, brought her trunk and came to our house to get her husband's release. Father refused to interfere. One day as I was playing the piano, I heard her on the doorstep playing with a kitten into whose ears she was pouring her woes. I played more and more softly until her sobs could be heard above the music.

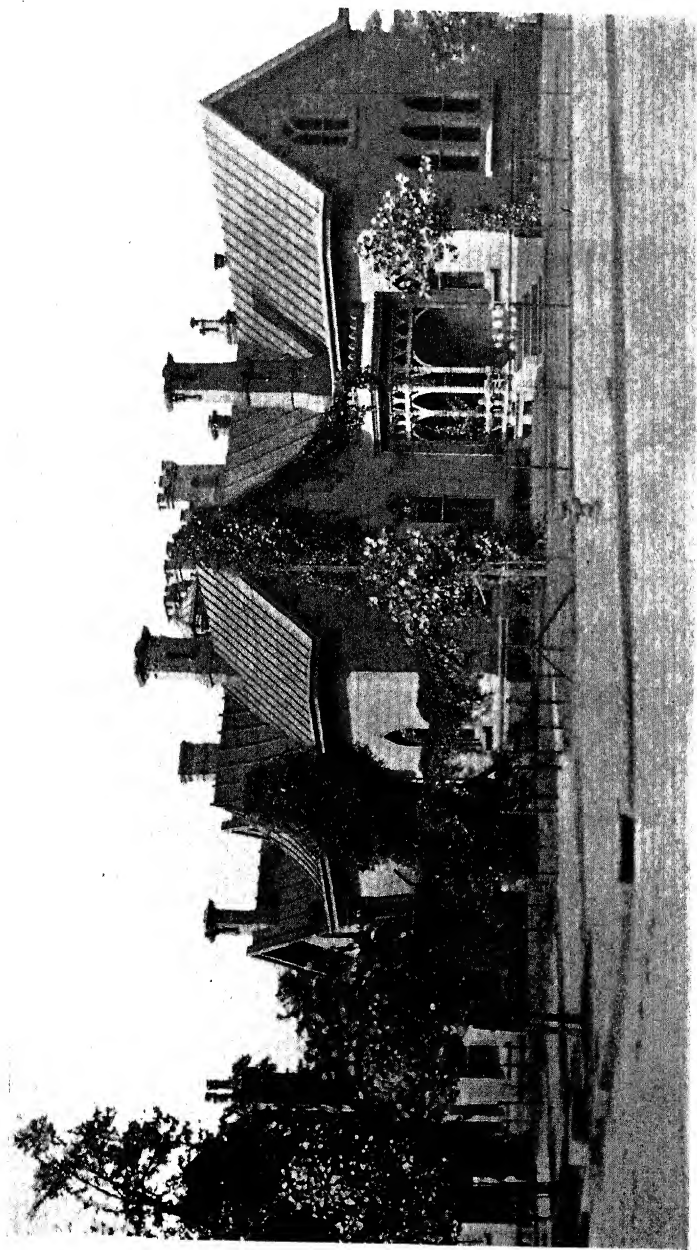
"Oh, pussy, it is so hard, so hard that our lives should be blighted when just begun."

That was more than I could bear. I fled to my father and interceded with the enthusiasm of my girlish heart, and after proper consideration, he pardoned the man. With his wife he went away and settled in a small town in the State. I kept track of them for years. The man lived an honorable life.

At the age of eighteen Kate had gained her place and recognition from her father's friends. She sat at the head of the table opposite him and entertained his many visitors. From her earliest years she had been interested in his public life, and now she made herself one with the group, entering into the conversation without restraint. Any man who sat before the Governor's hearth-fire during the late Fifties did not readily forget his clever daughter, who had won the reputation of being "an astute politician." Charles Sumner, the Chase household god, whose portrait hung in two or more of their rooms, critical celibate that he was, had acknowledged Kate at the age of ten to be remarkably "intelligent." In the years to follow, he rarely omitted, in his letters to the father, some reference to her. "Remember me to your intelligent daughter, who must now be a great comfort to you. . . . I am glad to hear so many pleasant things about your daughter. . . . Don't forget to tell your daughter how cordially I remember her." Governor Chase did not forget to tell Kate what Senator Sumner had said. He was proud to have his daughter admired by so highly intellectual a gentleman.

Within her father's heart Kate occupied a double place, that of daughter and in part of wife. During the long winter evenings they read, talked or played chess, their two handsome heads close together. What





HOME OF GOVERNOR CHASE, COLUMBUS, OHIO



thoughts occupied them as they moved the pawns upon the board? Chiefly we surmise the coming presidential campaign. Both were of one mind, to gain the great goal, the White House. That would require adroit management of forces. Would they be able to manipulate men to their purpose as easily as they moved these bits of ivory?

For a year and more before the coming election, Chase had kept in touch with the trend of mind from Maine to California. He wrote and received scores of letters. A part of them Kate was permitted to read. She was proud of the praise accorded her great father. He was known and admired the country over. But there were those who, through selfishness or jealousy, wished to topple over this god whom the people worshipped. They charged him with vacillation. He had been successively a Whig, a Liberty Man, a Free Soiler, and finally a Republican, while in principle a "democratic Democrat"—as he chose to express it. He was called a "trimmer," and worse epithets. He accepted villification without retort. To Sumner he wrote at this time: "As to all personal attacks I shall content myself with a simple appeal to the whole tenor of my past life and leave my vindication to Time and Public Reason." His ambition could not wait for that final verdict. The Republicans were soon to meet and choose their nominee.

On the eve of the Convention, Governor Chase had high hopes of being the honored one. He and Kate had been in Washington during the first week in May, and his friends had shown him much favor. On his way home he wrote a political pusher at New York: "You must go to Chicago . . . don't fail to go. A great change seemed to come over men's minds while I was

in Washington . . . there is reason to hope and hope is reason for work—and you are a capital worker and *so you must go*.” The message ended with, “What leading friendly New Yorkers will go?”

A number of the “friendly” New Yorkers attended the Convention, bringing much good-will for Governor Chase, but little active influence, since they were unauthorized to speak or act.<sup>6</sup> The Ohio delegation had been instructed to present the name of Salmon P. Chase and he doubted not they would “faithfully represent the Republicans of the State.” The too-confiding candidate was disappointed. The Convention stampeded for Lincoln, and the name *Chase* was lost in the tumult. His admirers throughout the State were nonplussed and indignant. In Cincinnati, they gathered in groups to talk over the behavior of the “traitors” and to analyze the cause. A nephew of Chase attributed the disaffection to “deep-seated hatred.” He scored his uncle for being “too good.”

You have spoken pleasant words to the old Whigs,—you have been very polite to the Spread Eagles, as they are called—to both you have been so attentive as from consideration of policy to pass by some of your old friends—the fact is, Uncle, you have not gained anything by patting these men on the back. They have turned on you. . . . Show them that you know them and oppose an open hostile front to their base intriguing set . . . you more than any other man moulded and perfected the organization, and in payment for it no service was treated with more contempt than yours—ignored—abandoned without a vote, a speech, a simple effort. . . . Intrigue did the business for you and so succeeded that your position before the Chicago Convention was

<sup>6</sup> Among those attending the Chicago convention in private capacity were George Opdyke, David Dudley Field, representing the anti-Weed element, and Mr. Bryant, Mr. Barney, and Mr. Greeley, opposed to Seward.

apparently that of an unknown man from Western Wilds whose name was thrust forward by a backwoods congressional constituency.

The young man's inflamed feelings led him into inaccuracy. Chase did receive on two of the three ballots the third largest number of votes, which, however, were relinquished in favor of Lincoln.

Governor Chase was overwhelmed with condolences. He was assured that Mr. Lincoln had "a soft side" for the Ohio man who, in '58, had gone out of his State to help the Illinoisan win a seat in the Senate, and that he would pay for the "aid and comfort" by giving his helper a prominent place in the Cabinet. In reply when pressed to express a desire for a Cabinet portfolio, he said, "Don't want it, and of course don't wish friends to be at all active about it." But they were insistent. One wrote, "I have heard the strongest desire expressed that you should hold the first place in Mr. Lincoln's cabinet. This wish is uttered by men of all classes of antecedents—Democrats, Whigs, and Americans." Overcome by the pressure, the defeated candidate began to weigh the possibility of acceptance of a Cabinet position. Already he had been elected Senator, but had not yet taken his oath.

Which should it be, Senatorship or a Secretaryship? As a springboard, the former was less binding, and he wished to keep footloose to leap forward to the highest mound. Ambition was insistently ringing in his ear, a call his admirers echoed. One wrote, June 15, '60: "I am confident your friends will be tenacious of your nomination to succeed Mr. Lincoln." But to be Secretary of State was an honor one could scarcely refuse. When that biggest plum in the basket fell to his one-

time Liberty Party friend, and more recently his Republican rival, William H. Seward, the Chase pride was piqued. Chase was invited to accept the second highest place, head of the Treasury. He promised to consider it.

He wished to be first or nothing. To be first had been his slogan since a boy. The sagacious men of the country were well satisfied to have Salmon P. Chase named as the prospective head of the Treasury Department. A prominent financier <sup>7</sup> wrote Chase at this time:

Unless the incoming administration shall inaugurate a system of the most rigid economy, and strictest honesty, it will break down in the first year. . . . Now it is believed that the President elect has offered you the place and that you have declined it. If that is so, let me beg of you, for God's sake and the Country's, reconsider this; and save the party and the great cause that brought it into being.

Charles Sumner joined in the appeal. He writes from the Senate Chamber, January 19, '61:

I looked forward to you as a colleague in the Senate and a pillar there of our cause, and I was unwilling to say a word to incline you to any change. Indeed, I have been fixed in the opinion that you ought to be in the Senate—that there your great powers could be most felt, and your usefulness most evident. . . . But our new administration under the peculiar circumstances which now surround us, will be called to deal directly with great questions of principle . . . such a responsibility can be adequately met only by firmness, courage, and inflexible principle. More than anything else I fear surrender.—No, we must stand firm. Therefore I trust that you will accept the post of Secretary of the Treasury. . . . Governor Brigham who is by my side, says that your acceptance is 'our only salvation'. . . .

This was a clinching argument for acceptance of the Treasury portfolio, coming as it did from the man of all men Chase most admired. Still he reserved the privilege

<sup>7</sup> F. E. Spinner.

of longer consideration. With his strong streak of stubbornness he refused to be forced. He would take his time. Early in February, he left Ohio for the Capital City to attend the Peace Conference.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup>The Peace Conference assembled under an invitation from Virginia to try to harmonize relations between the North and South. In the short speech Chase made before the delegates, he plead for reason and a conciliatory spirit and warned against precipitant action: "War, Civil War! Mr. President, let us not rush headlong into that unfathomable gulf!" At Mr. Chase's motion, the conference adjourned to meet after April 1st. When that time came the country was on the brink of the "gulf" and men were beyond reason.

## VII

### WASHINGTON

**I**N 1860 Washington was still a town. Though laid out for a million, it had only eighty thousand residents. Architecturally it was an incongruous mixture of hovels and temples. The streets were country roads and mud-holes in winter. Salmon P. Chase, country born and bred, was not greatly disturbed by rural conditions, but Kate in crossing streets and getting into her carriage would find that delicately tinted silk gowns and velvet cloaks required skill in management. Nevertheless, Washington at its worst was far preferable to Columbus at its best, and both father and daughter were glad to come to the Capital.

Chase was returning after four years' absence to resume, as he thought, his seat in the Senate, and with a sense of superiority quite the reverse of his feeling of insignificance when he had entered the Chamber ten years before, surrounded as he was by the giants, Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Benton, Cass. Now these men were gone and he came next in their distinguished class. Kate in her own sphere was no less confident of her power. During her previous brief visits to the Capital she had never failed to leave her impress. Here was a radiant personality, a princess.

After one flitting stay, a friend of her father's, writing Chase, added a message for her: "Give my love to Miss Kate and say to her that Washington seemed very dull



after she went away." The same admiring gentleman, on the eve of her recent coming, had expressed his pleasure at the prospect of again seeing her in Washington and predicted her enjoyment of the life here, which "lovers of excitement" think "never more attractive than now."

Washington was under high tension excitement from the moment when Lincoln arrived after his secret journey, and received members of the Peace Congress. The inaugural ball, held in the flimsy but gay Muslin Palace of Aladdin that had been erected in Judiciary Square, brought out a motley crowd of people who danced in spite of the press. The ladies were arrayed in their gayest of gowns, violet brocade, blue tarletan, white and gold, making in all a colorful flower garden. At the first formal reception given by the President and Mrs. Lincoln, the costuming was more elegant and formal: crinolined silks and satins requiring wide expanse for the wearer, with here and there a velvet or moire gown worn without hoops. Probably, the two most contrasting figures on the floor were Mrs. Lincoln in white satin and black lace with a head dress of black and white flowers—ostentatious and unbecoming—and Kate Chase in white silk with sprays of jasmine—the gown seeming a part of her youthful self.

The father and daughter, both tall and handsome, arm in arm, mingled with the crowd that surged through the Blue Room to shake the hand of the new President. They were a pair that evidently felt much pride in each other, and they drew forth a murmur of attention. As they stopped to greet their old friend, Charles Sumner, center of the diplomatic circle, Miss Chase was presented to the foreign gentlemen, who we

surmise, were enthralled by her extraordinary charm. Next the couple saluted the military group: General McClellan and his staff in full uniform, and General Frémont in plain suit, with his wife, the sweet Jessie Benton at his side. Finally, Kate and her father paid their devoirs to the European guests, the Duc de Chartres and the Princess Royal of France, who if they had been tongue-tied in this American company might recover their speech under the stimulus of Mademoiselle Chase's fluent French. As for Kate, she did not lose her perfect aplomb. Not even a prince could make her forget her part. She was in her element. She delighted in the nobility. Yet as her father's child she was democratic—though not without a taint of snobbishness. She hated the commonplace.

The official world was still waiting for the verdict of Governor Chase: whether he would be a member of the Cabinet, or a Senator. On inauguration day the press reporters were confused. It was rumored "for the hundredth time" that he was "out of the Treasury." The next morning, Chase took his seat in the Senate. At the same hour Mr. Lincoln sent in the name of Salmon P. Chase for Secretary of the Treasury and it was instantly confirmed. At the moment he was absent from the Chamber and when he learned of it, he rushed to the President to decline the honor. Lincoln, with masterful power, persuaded Chase to join the Administration, and he came out of the White House pledged to sail on a dangerous voyage.

His stupendous labors began. Fortunately he had been trained from boyhood in the school of hard work, for immediately he was swamped in a sea of applications for office, ranging from consulships to mail agen-

cies; of communications from illiterate constituents, who were moved to give the Cabinet Minister their opinions on the new tariff bill, the President's message, the production of beet sugar, and what not. All these letters the Secretary read and answered. Then also he received daily a procession of claimants for positions. Last but not least, he had the business of organizing his department.

While the father was thus absorbed, the daughter's days were given to a flutter of movement incident to the arrival of the loyal army. Sixty thousand troops were being quartered in and near the town. The ladies went military mad. Civilians stood small chance of catching the feminine fancy. Apollo himself would have been passed unnoticed if he had not worn shoulder straps. Laws of social usage were suspended. What in time of peace was set down as wholly improper, now became the order of the day. To visit the camps was the vogue. The ladies, old and young, Mrs. Lincoln with the rest, fêted and flattered the men and loaded them with dainties.

One of the favorite regiments was the Rhode Island First, trained, fitted out, and brought to Washington by the Boy Governor, William Sprague. After the Fort Sumter firing, he had wired the President, "Will you accept First Rhode Island Regiment?" and Mr. Lincoln wired back, "Yes, send them quickly." The young captain instantly started for the Capital with his boys, reaching there April 18, and encamped in a grove near the city. Though by reason of wealth and as governor of his state, this young knight was an aristocrat in caste; still, he could condescend to make his supper of a piece of bread and a drink of water from a tin cup

along with his men. The ladies adored this young knight, so brave, so debonair. Captain Sprague became at once the most popular young man in Washington.

On May 1, in front of the White House, his regiment was sworn in—not one man refusing. Fifteen hundred with hands upraised took the oath simultaneously, the response sounding, as a bystander remarked, like one mighty voice. The colors were flung from the roof of the Patent Office which had been assigned them as barracks. President Lincoln appeared on the roof, seized the halyard and hoisted it. The crowd cheered. The men presented arms and went through the evolutions for the Commander-in-Chief, who was now standing in the portico. Wilder cheers.

The Boy Governor was the hero of the hour. Compliments were showered upon him. The ladies smiled upon him. But his heart responded to but one face and figure, that of Kate Chase, *Daughter of the Regiment*; while she scattered her smiles among the officers and men. With her insatiate appetite for admiration, Kate was thoroughly happy to be the favorite lady of the army officers, Belle of Washington. Almost daily, she was seen in the company of Captain Sprague, assuming the attitude of hostess at the Rhode Island Quarters. When the tiny Julia Taft one day took an offering of flowers from the White House Conservatory to present to Captain Sprague at the Patent Office, Miss Chase swept down the room and took the bouquet from the child's hands, with the promise that she would see that the gentleman received it. The disappointed Julie on her return to Mrs. Lincoln was assured by that lady that she should go again when Miss Chase was not present and hand her flowers to the Captain himself.



CAPTAIN WILLIAM SPRAGUE



To discover such an occasion was difficult. So constant was the sight of the couple together, that the rumor of the engagement of Miss Chase to Captain Sprague got into the newspapers. Her Ohio friends began to ask whether or not it was true. If Kate took the trouble to answer the query, her reply would have been in the negative. No, she was not engaged, though Captain Sprague was dancing attendance, morning, noon and night.

Throughout May and June, Washington laughed and danced. Private parties, hotel hops, eating, drinking and merriment. On May 21 the Swards entertained the officers of the volunteer regiments. Three days later came the formal presentation of a flag to the "Seventh New York," followed by a reception at the White House. Everywhere Kate Chase was present surrounded by a cohort of military devotees. The men were in fine form and fettle. All went merry as a marriage bell. But hark, what sound breaks on the ear? The call to arms!

July 16, McDowell's grand army, 30,000 strong, began their march of twenty-seven miles south—a mighty undertaking for raw troops in the heat of summer. Captain Sprague and his brother officers responded with eager desire to go forth and prove their spurs. Clad in brilliant military uniform, many with showy zouave dress, they marched with grave gaiety, sure that they would soon return victorious and the threatened war would be over. One of the young soldiers of the 71st Regiment New York composed a marching song, as the men trudged along under the burning July sun, foot-sore and hungry, for these raw recruits had not carefully conserved their rations. This was the song:

## SPRAGUE AT BULL RUN

(Tune "The Other Side of Jordan")

The troops of Rhode Island were posted along on the road  
from Annapolis Station,  
As the 71st Regiment one thousand strong went on in defense  
of the nation.

We'd been marching all day in the sun's scorching ray, with  
two biscuits each as a ration  
When we asked Gov. Sprague to show us the way, and How  
many miles to the Junction?

*Chorus*

'Just keep up your courage—you'll get there tonight,  
For it's only nine miles to the Junction.'  
They gave us hot coffee, a grasp of the hand,  
Which cheered and refreshed our exhaustion.  
We reached in six hours the long promised land,  
For 'twas only nine miles to the Junction.

Sunday, July 21. The attack had opened. Cannon balls and muskets crashed through the trees around these volunteers, who never before had heard the sound of artillery. A general panic combined with the frightful slaughter made all attempt to retreat in order impossible. Every man who had been spared his life ran wildly from the blood-stained field where lay three thousand comrades. Reports that reached Washington were sketchy. "Rhode Island regiment's in the fight. . . . Rhode Island Battery taken by the rebels at the bridge, their horses all killed. . . . Governor Sprague's horse shot from under him. . . . Rhode Island troops—220 killed, wounded and missing." The return presented a dismal picture.

Gloom settled down in Washington. Instead of the admiring thousands that were wont to witness the evening parades, now only a few stragglers were to be seen.



On the spot where their splendid batteries had been planted, now but a single gun. The army was utterly demoralized. There was not a cheerful face in the city. The President was alarmed. The officers of his gallant army were being censured, Captain Sprague, Mr. Lincoln's favorite Bluecoat<sup>1</sup> among the rest. The battle had ended in a panic.

The Capital was distraught, but still kept up a semblance of hope. The last White House reception of the season was crowded. The officers that returned were in full uniform, Captain Sprague among the rest, sobered and chastened by the recent baptism of fire.<sup>2</sup> Kate Chase on the arm of her father moved about scattering her sympathetic charm. Mrs. Lincoln looked nettled, Mr. Lincoln, jaded. The atmosphere was tense. What of the future? Everyone was asking the cryptic question. If Kate Chase felt the oppression of the coming storm, even more did Mary Todd Lincoln.

They had come to the Capital at the same time, with similar anticipation of shining socially. They already, after only four months, were suffering from depressing conditions. At first they were congenial spirits. To the President's wife shivering from the dread that her reign was likely to be a chill and dismal thing, this life-loving girl came like a breath of balmy air. But the temperature quickly dropped. The two were diametrically opposed in nature. The tempestuous Mrs. Lincoln with her flighty manners, her strident voice and too frequent laugh, was in striking contrariety to Kate's self-assured

<sup>1</sup> After the death of the young Colonel Ellsworth Mr. Lincoln's fatherly heart had given the Boy Governor first place.

<sup>2</sup> Bull Run was Capt. Sprague's first and last battle, though he aided the cause by contributing his wealth towards the formation of a second R. I. regiment.

and statuesque poise. Moreover, as soon as the Secretary's daughter revealed that her chief aim was the furtherance of her father's ambition, Mrs. Lincoln's manner towards Kate changed.

Jealousy was showing its head though still in shadow. Kate, on her part, became weary of the rôle of social assistant. Mrs. Lincoln was glad to be relieved of this young princess, who was given to setting up court on her own account and drawing about her the most interesting of the guests. Not content with being the First Lady of the Cabinet,<sup>3</sup> this imperious young beauty was stepping upon the dais and assuming the star part in the scene—for Mrs. Lincoln never was *first* when Kate appeared. An added reason for Mrs. Lincoln's envy was the current impression that the President was paying homage to the mentality of the Secretary's daughter, a deference he failed to show his neurotic wife.

As the relations between the two women grew increasingly more strained, those of the President and his Secretary did likewise. The cause was Mr. Chase's constant criticism of his Chief. Salmon P. Chase's confidence in his ability to steer the Ship of State was undoubted. As early as November, 1860, he wrote: "The disunion madcaps make us much trouble; but I think old Ironsides won't go to pieces yet. I know she wouldn't if I were president, as I should like to be for just six months now." Again, the same month, he wrote: "If the executive power of the nation were in my hand, I should know what to do. I would maintain the Union, support the Constitution and enforce the laws. If I were president, I would indeed exhaust every expedient

<sup>3</sup> As Mrs. Seward was in ill health she entertained little. By the law of precedence Miss Chase ranked next in order.

of forbearance consistent with safety. But at all hazards and against all opposition, the laws of the Union should be enforced." After the firing of Sumter, Chase said, "If I had \$20,000,000, I could put down the rebellion!" It was not long before \$20,000,000 was required each week only to make the attempt.

Salmon P. Chase had the problem facing him of financing an expensive war. Also, he had the personal task of financing his own household, the open house of a Cabinet Minister, with its continuous dispensing of hospitality. Chase was a poor manager. He never had learned the lesson his frugal Scotch mother had tried to teach him, that of taking care of the pence. It seemed impossible for him to free himself from the tyranny of debt. Always he was having dead horses to dispose of. He could not live within his income. Household bills running into the hundreds<sup>4</sup> and a note of two thousand dollars followed him from Columbus.

The first months in Washington, the Secretary of the Treasury was extremely nervous over his finances. He tried to sell his Columbus house. He prodded his agents to sell his Cincinnati city property, but there was a slump in real estate at the time, and they could not even collect the rent. There was nothing to do but to borrow. But of whom? He thought of Hiram Barney, now Collector of the Port of New York, a Chase appointee, and arranged with Mr. Barney for a loan of ten thousand dollars, at seven per cent for two years. Mr. Chase though laying up trouble for himself as a debtor to a subordinate, was temporarily relieved—at least he had funds for the starting of housekeeping. He leased a fine, three-story red brick mansion at the corner

<sup>4</sup> A grocery bill of \$137.

of E and Sixth Streets Northwest, at \$1,200 a year; servants were engaged, less than half a dozen, for Chase wished to live simply. Catherine Vaudry, the colored cook, was paid two dollars per week, the butler, the second maid, and the coachman, similar rates; they were to have their board and keep, their wage was a negligible matter.

Furnishings for the house constituted the biggest initial expenditure. Early in October the young mistress was off to New York on a shopping expedition, stopping over in the Quaker City to visit her friends the Cookes. In a letter to Jay Cooke (Oct. 3, 1861) Chase sent a message to his daughter: "Tell Kate if you get this in time, to give a look at Philadelphia carpet stores and furniture establishments before she goes to New York." Kate already had taken her look, ordered velvet carpeting, and was off for the Metropolis to buy more carpeting to complete her purchases and to open an account at A. T. Stewart's. Governor Sprague acted as escort for Miss Chase.<sup>5</sup> She wrote: "We were extremely successful at Stewart's in our selection of carpets. Mr. S. himself was present on the occasion & saw that we were well served. Mr. Varnum<sup>6</sup> too joined us there, and acceded cheerfully & handsomely to my proposals." Of course, everyone was most courteous in fulfilling the desires of so abundant handed a patron as the Secretary's daughter. On his part, the father, back in Washington, was a good deal worried over the cost involved in the shopping expedition and warned Miss Kate

<sup>5</sup> Governor Sprague stood high in Kate's esteem. In a polite note she wrote to Mr. Barney on leaving the city, she sends him her escort's good bye, "a great man's kind messages."

<sup>6</sup> Mr. Varnum was the gentleman from whom the Chases rented their Washington residence.

against spending too much—though it is doubtful if his words had any considerable effect. His letter was handed to her just as she was leaving for downtown from the Continental Hotel.

My darling Katie,

Before you leave New York you must select a close carriage, as we shall need one this winter. In making the selection I need hardly caution you to avoid extravagance, as it is going to be hard work to make both ends meet here: and if any circumstance should compel me to resign before long my expenses will have far exceeded my income. It does seem a little hard that one who so much & such important work to do as I have had for the last twelve years should all the time have had to pay so large a part of his own expences (sic). If it were not for the name of the thing it would not be worth while to hold prominent position, involving little else than incessant labor with the privilege of finding oneself.

He might well have added "finding" his daughter—an even more expensive "privilege."

Kate did not purchase the carriage in New York. When Secretary Chase appealed to Cooke to select a coupé, light, strong, shutting up close, for one horse, neat, yet fit for office work, the carriage was selected and sent on with a receipted bill. This gave Chase some anxiety, lest the acceptance of expensive gifts might be made the subject of public censure. He responded. "As I find my expenses overrun my income, I should be strongly tempted to accept it as you offer it, but I must accept no presents beyond those which the ordinary intercourse of society prompts and allows from a friend." The coupé therefore was returned.

Generous Jay Cooke was happy to help the Secretary and his daughter, "a glorious girl," as he characterized her. She, on her part, was less squeamish about acceptance of gifts at his hand. While at The

Cedars, Kate had admired some bookcases in the Library and straightway duplicates were made and sent on to Washington for the Chase home. Kate in acknowledgment remarked that in future she would be careful how she admired anything in the Cooke home.

The friendship between the Chases and Cookes grew apace. The Treasury Head more and more looked to the financier for aid both for himself and for the country. When the two men made a hurried trip to New York to make a further drive before the Chamber of Commerce for a fifty million dollar loan, Kate accompanied them. Nettie remained in Philadelphia.

One circumstance cemented the friendship still more strongly between the two families. Janet, on her way to New York to enter Mrs. Macaulay's Private School, visited the Cookes, where she was stricken with scarlet fever, the dread disease that had taken Mr. Chase's first child, twenty-one years and more before. He now was very anxious about little Nettie. He could not leave Washington. Kate immediately announced her intention of going to her sister's bedside. Mr. Cooke was about to return home from the Capital and escorted Miss Chase to Philadelphia. The following day the father received word that Kate herself was under the doctor's care with a high fever. He became highly overwrought in mind. Nothing was able to touch this calm, restrained man like danger to his daughters. However, they both recovered and the father was relieved and happy once more.

The remaining days of autumn before Congress opened were devoted by Kate to the settling of the home, and getting the wheels of her ménage running smoothly. She had an important position to fill as mis-

treasure of a Cabinet Member's home. She anticipated the duties with genuine gusto. "If one learns to like responsibility, it will rest easily upon one," she remarked years later, when Nettie took charge of her father's home. How easily Kate's responsibilities were carried was testified to by her guests.

When the 4th of December came, she was prepared to mount her throne and wield her scepter. With splendid vitality she had no fear of failing. With her dynamic temperament no task looked difficult. She had the hostess habit, she delighted in dispensing hospitality. She was elated to be the center of attention. She had in supreme degree the Will to Power.

## VIII

### PRINCESS CATHERINE

THE republican court opened with the usual schedule of dinners, dances and receptions; not, be it said, with the usual buoyancy of spirit. An atmosphere of premonition and constraint pervaded official life. Bonhomie and good will were being dissipated between men and women who previously had been the best of friends. Nevertheless, society must keep up its routine of gaiety, superficially at least. The Secretary's daughter had an important rôle to play and she applied her mind to learning the technique of social dramatics; and studied the laws that governed official hospitality.

There were the rules concerning precedence. She had read in her history, no doubt, of the threatened war between England and the United States arising from the simple fact of President Jefferson's taking in to dinner Dolly Madison, wife of his Secretary of State, rather than Madame Merry, the British Ambassador's wife. Perhaps Kate had heard, too, of the offense arising when a gentleman host led in the wife of a foreign minister, and not the wife of a senator. With such very tiny coals for kindling, bitter feuds might blow up between court and cabinet dignitaries. Then there was the etiquette of calls, that had created a furor during the Monroe administration, when the President's daughter, Mrs. Hay, stood out for the rule that White House ladies make no first calls. Now Kate was confronted by





KATE CHASE IN CAMP

From The Photographic History of the Civil War. Copyright 1911 by The Review of Reviews Co.



the question, who should pay the first call, the Cabinet Minister or the Senator. She was positive that her father should never pay Benjamin F. Wade that honor, he who had played false at the Chicago Convention. And again there was the question of titles. Kate had to practice to say easily and graciously, "The Honorable the Secretary of State, Mr. Seward," though it would stick in her throat, for she liked that gentleman, her father's rival, even less than did Mr. Chase himself.

Another problem that faced the young lady was choice of entertainment. Should it be the *musicale*, the *soirée conversational*, or the *matinée dansante*? Mrs. Douglas during the previous administration had introduced the afternoon dancing party, with blinds drawn and candles lighted to give a mystic glow, and it still was the vogue. Kate decided on the *matinée dansante*. Wednesday evenings were to be devoted to dinners and a reception for her father. Everyone liked dinners, she knew. Had not Daniel Webster declared that a perfect dinner was the highest consummation of civilization—and Kate's dinners were to be perfect, because planned and carried out with most meticulous care. First, the list of guests was to be made out and the cards sent at the proper time; and next, the tactful placing of guests with congenial persons as neighbors, not forgetting to put the most distinguished next her father and herself. Observance of rank was essential, in spite of the democratic dictum of equality. Last, there was the necessary training of servants to respond to the mistress' least glance. Miss Chase was severe in her discipline, yet her colored help were devoted to her; when at times, she found it necessary to discharge them, they were quite

sure to "come crawling back" the next day and beg to be reinstated.

The Secretary's daughter carried out her season's program successfully, and gained the distinction of being a perfect hostess, whose graceful dignity and sweet condescension made every one feel at ease. Kate Chase was to the manner born, the leading star in the cast. She was called the Belle of Washington and the most popular girl among the army officers. If being on perpetual dress parade was trying, Kate did not show it. There was one constant succession of movement at the Chase mansion from morning till night: from breakfast at eight-thirty, when out-of-town friends were welcome, down to dinner and the evening reception.<sup>1</sup> On all occasions, Kate was expected to be present, to preside at table and receive in the drawing-room and to accept the masculine homage that was generously paid. She delighted in playing the rôle of princess.

Regulation war work was not to her taste; knitting socks and sewing havelocks were unsuited to her dainty fingers; and nursing the sick was repulsive to her—as it is to most princesses. "She shrank from the hard and lowly task of visiting the wretched hut, the sick, and the afflicted. So do Victoria and Eugenie," wrote a woman journalist of the time. Yet, once at least, Kate received a wounded soldier into the home and later made him her protégé, a romantic service to her taste. She was not devoid of pity, but it stopped short of self-sacrifice. When the weight of the war pressed heavily on the country, Kate Chase with "almost despair of the future," as she wrote a friend, was "trying to keep

<sup>1</sup> Young James A. Garfield was invited to make the Chase home his own whenever he happened to be in the city.

a good heart and longing to be of some use in the humble sphere women are allowed to fill in great crises like the present." Sometimes, at her father's solicitation, she visited the hospitals carrying fruits and jellies, but her beneficence ended there. Kate Chase's superb energy found outlet for the most part in selfish social activity, in receptions, dinners, dancing, and dressing.

New Year's Day 1862. Washington was under the fear of being besieged, though late successes on the field of battle had helped to counteract the anxiety. In spite of the gloom, society went through the formula of receiving and making calls; the gentlemen going from house to house and drinking the health of the hostess and her fair assistants in generous bumpers of eggnogg. First in order was the White House reception. When Secretary Chase and his daughters arrived, they found the grounds packed with people, but managed to pass through to the Executive Mansion, pay their respects to the President and his Lady, and get out again. As Chase later discovered, it was an expensive experience, for he had had his pockets picked of between fifty and one hundred dollars in gold. Not so happy a New Year for the Secretary of the Treasury!

Later in the day Miss Chase received in the spacious drawing-room of the mansion on the corner of Sixth and E Streets Northwest, with Mrs. McDowell, wife of General McDowell, assisting. The General was then covering Washington with his army. The Chase reception drew a brilliant attendance of uniformed gentlemen, the diplomatic corps, and many officers of the army. Perhaps the most distinguished of the visitors was Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador. Secretary Chase greeted his caller with *Pax esto perpetua*, and

his lordship responded with the hope that his conduct be always that of a peace-maker. It is recalled that just at this time, in the early stages of the war, England was veering in her sympathies towards the South, and, in consequence, our relations with that country were strained almost to the snapping point; and that a crisis was averted only through the efforts of our American Minister, Charles Francis Adams, and the British Ambassador, Lord Lyons. As a mark of gratitude for the latter's successful diplomacy, the Queen created Lord Lyons a Knight Grand Cross of the Bath.

Kate Chase, as well, is credited with having played a telling part in sustaining the harmony between the two countries, through her personal influence upon Lord Lyons. The bachelor minister was acknowledged to be Miss Chase's ardent admirer, her platonic lover at least. His blasé lordship must have found this scintillant girl from the West a sparkling fillip to his jaded sensibilities. From the beginning of his mission to this country, he had been interested in American girls; three years before he had made love to President Buchanan's niece, Miss Lane, but nothing came of it. In Kate Chase the titled gentleman found a more stimulating challenge to his admiration, intellectual as well as physical charm. However, if on this New Year's day, as he sat in the twilight in the soft candle glow, breathing the air of fragrant hothouse flowers, Lord Lyons was moved to suggest marriage to the Secretary's daughter, he would not have found her acquiescent. Kate Chase was determined never to leave her father. Her destiny, so she felt, was to help him win the presidency, and herself be First Lady of the land.

Already his friends were agitating in his behalf,

while he, restless as always, was dreaming of the privileges and honors of the highest position in the country. With a mountain of work constantly over him, he entertained the demon of discontent. He was not controlling the President as he had hoped to do. He was not on congenial terms with the Cabinet. His superiority-complex irritated them. But his intimate world, his friends—and he had a host of them—acknowledged him as “the biggest man in the country” and regretted he was not the head of the government in place of Mr. Lincoln. Indeed, the whole country was getting on edge because of the inefficient conduct of the war. In Cincinnati, the “wildest steps” were advocated, such as the impeachment of Lincoln and the formation of an independent party. “The President has lost the confidence of the people,” wrote an editor to Chase. Should the Secretary of the Treasury stand by the Administration? While the post in the Cabinet was “perfectly destructive of all hope of the Presidency,” it still was the post of honor and duty, wrote a young Ohio friend to Chase.

To accept the diverse counsel of his various friends was impossible. He would stand consistently upon a middle ground, between the impatient radicals and the patient conservatives, though he found such a position difficult. Charles Sumner, of mutinous temperament, sometimes clashed with his old friend, whose nature was less aggressive. On one occasion, that winter of '62, Kate had invited the Senator to a turkey dinner and an evening in the drawing-room. Afterwards, Chase recorded his mood in his diary entry for the day. “Do the best I can, I find myself exposed to so much misconstruction by my best friends that I have come abso-

lutely to hate public life." A passing mood, for public life was his meat and drink. He was carrying on a stupendous labor and Hercules himself should be pardoned for ill temper when the nerves get frayed.

Summer came on, and the city still was being threatened with a siege. Kate and Nettie were packed off for the North. Their father remained to endure the heat and burden of the day. New treasury notes were about to be issued and he must stay by his job. Every week day found him at the Department. Sundays he attended "useless Cabinet Meetings" which kept him away from church service <sup>2</sup> for the first time in his life, and put him in bad humor. Evenings, he drove out, often calling on his lady friends. Mrs. Stephen A. Douglas, widow of his one-time political enemy, received particular attention that summer. Once in late August not finding the fair lady at home, he left as a *carte de visite* to put in her album, a new treasury note cut in halves. This attractive young woman, now living in retirement with her mother at the Cutts home, was made the subject of jealousy by another of the Secretary's lady friends, Miss Susan Walker of Cincinnati.

Since the beginning of the war, women had been engaged in government service, when Secretary Chase first employed them to trim the greenback notes. Miss Walker inquired of him whether Mrs. Douglas had not been favored with a position and he wrote in reply: "Mrs. Douglas is indeed a charming woman but has no position in the Treasury Department, nor in any other so far as I know" and added that there was no one employed by him "who to other claims does not join

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Chase belonged to the Methodist Church. His daughters attended St. John's Episcopal church.



that of real pecuniary need—need sometimes most distressing.”<sup>3</sup> Only an unmarried woman was eligible. As soon as she took unto herself a husband, she was promptly discharged.<sup>4</sup>

Chase was an advocate of woman suffrage. Once when asked his opinion on Woman's Rights, he replied that he “was for putting everything in the hands of the women & letting them govern.” He added that he did not see but that his daughters were as qualified to take part in affairs as he was at their age. In spite of this broad admission he would not have women neglect the home. Their intellectual and moral liberty should be strictly curbed. Free thought and free love were abominations. His Puritan prejudices came out sharply in his refusal to assist Walt Whitman to a position, notwithstanding the poet Emerson was giving his name to the project. A snappy little story has been told anent this Chase taboo. One day, while calling upon a Washington lady and waiting for her to come down, he picked up a volume from the parlor table. It was “Leaves of Grass.” The lady entered and her caller greeted her with, “And why, may I ask, is this book here?” To which the lady retorted, “And, why, may I ask, are you here?” A saucy Roland for his impertinent Oliver—the sort of answer Kate Chase might naturally have made under similar provocation.

<sup>3</sup> The letter was written in 1864.

<sup>4</sup> F. E. Spinner in the Treasury Dept. under Secretary Chase once became profanely wrathful against his Chief for discharging a young woman after marriage. ‘Dammit, if Chase wants my resignation he can have it but he shant discharge one of my clerks. A 1400 dollar man couldn’t do the work she does for 900. Why, some of these girls frisk around & play the very dickens, & nobody thinks of sending them adrift; but one of ’em gets herself honestly & decently married then they want to put her out. Dammit, she shant be put out’—and she wasn’t.

Salmon Portland Chase by nature was a devoted lover of the sex, though this emotional propensity had been held in careful subjection by his daughter, who had made up her mind that she herself was to be the only woman in her father's life. Whenever he felt free of her leading strings for an occasional brief period, he took advantage of it by cultivating his lady friends. And he enjoyed his sense of escape from the daughter's espionage, so it appears. When he wrote Kate that summer of '62 advising her not to come home immediately, "the siege threatens and the heat is insufferable," he may have had his own pleasure as well as Kate's welfare at heart.

From time to time the handsome widower entertained the idea of marrying. Less than a year after his third wife's demise, as he travelled about he met attractive women who would have been willing to become Mrs. Chase the Fourth. Two New England ladies were angling: a Miss Anne P. who inspired a conundrum in verse, and a fair Emily who brought forth a clever limerick or two from the facile pen of S.P.C.—light poetic fancies thrown off before breakfast of a March morning.<sup>5</sup>

The girls of Nantucket are carefully taught  
To pickle the fish that their father has caught  
So our Nantucket Emily, this work still intent on  
Has pickled & hung up an Ohio Salmon.

Good Isaac Walton's rules may do  
For English angling-lovers  
When round the river's shyest fish  
The line light-baited hovers  
But on our western shores you'd own

<sup>5</sup> Family Memoranda.

Good Isaac's rules all gammon  
A tender epigram's the thing  
To catch Ohio Salmon.

These passing fancies were uncultivated. Mr. Chase was wary of the hook and line. Now nearly ten years had passed. Still the ladies were throwing out the bait.

During this summer of 1863, he kept up a lively correspondence with his dear friend, Mrs. Eastman of Beverly, who often spent her winters in Washington. It was generally believed among their friends that they would have married, had not Kate frowned upon the idea. The story went that when the lady came for a fortnight as an invited guest of Secretary Chase in his Washington home, she was moved to cut short her visit because of the evident unwelcome she received from the daughter. Still the friendly relations continued between Mrs. Eastman, the charming widow, and Mr. Chase, the handsome widower. Without fear of censorship this sultry season, the letters from the Eastern seaboard flew into his hands like fresh breezes.

Sometimes the *billets doux* were written in French, a language the lady considered "capable of more ardor than ours," but as Mr. Chase was not too conversant with the French language, at his request her tender sentiments were couched in the familiar if less subtle English. Whichever the language, the writer though "afraid of saying too warm things" and inclining to hide her feelings "on the shady side," could not conceal her longings. When the busy Secretary failed to respond quickly, she gave him a gentle prod. "Send me a little line, my dear friend, just to keep up my spirits and to make the world look sunny—you are my Sun and your letters are the little rays." Though not

perhaps the most well chosen of metaphors for the heated season, still the jaded Secretary must have found such expression not unacceptable. Nor did the lady forget to manifest the sympathetic understanding of the Secretary's sensitive mood at this time, when he was sorely tried by the seeming futility of Administration action. Tactfully she echoes the Secretary's estimate of himself as a captain of statecraft. "I am quite of your opinion, that were you in possession of the reins of Government all would be managed well and the world would not be 'in flames.'"

Certainly, the Secretary of the Treasury was in a dangerously petulant mood. He complained to his Senator friends of the lack of harmony in the Cabinet and they demanded of the President a change of personnel, having in mind the retirement of the Secretary of State,—the Chase "gadfly" as Lincoln called Seward. As soon as Mr. Seward heard of the move, he sent in his resignation. Whereupon, the clever Mr. Lincoln called a meeting of the warring elements and put to a vote the acceptance of Mr. Seward's resignation. It was lost. He then called for an "expression" from the Secretary of the Treasury who, embarrassed, testified to "harmony." The next morning he resigned. Then Mr. President with his unfailing power of disciplining the unruly, commanded these angry Secretaries to return to their jobs and behave themselves. They did, Seward cheerfully, Chase reluctantly. But they returned, and Mr. Lincoln was satisfied with the outcome of his tactics. His saddlebags balanced.

Meanwhile, during the Secretary's political ordeal, Princess Catherine was taking her first taste of Saratoga waters and trying out the fashionable society of

that popular resort. Previously, Kate and Nettie, after concluding their visits in Ohio, had come East to spend some time with Mrs. McDowell. The McDowell home was situated six miles from Albany at a small place called Buttermilk Falls, surrounded by the picturesque scenery of the Hudson. In a hospitable home, conducted to promote comfort and relaxation, one might well be congratulated as guest. Not so Kate Chase. Quiet country life was not to her taste. She was most unhappy, and she did not conceal her feelings. When a release offered itself she promptly packed her trunk and was off for the North. Before leaving, she commissioned her hostess to report the daughter's whereabouts to her father. Mrs. McDowell wrote Secretary Chase:

Kate desires me to say to you that she has gone to Saratoga with Mr. and Mrs. Cummings and daughter for a few days to see what effect it will have on her health and spirit, both of which seem to her to have suffered here. Nettie, I think, has enjoyed her visit but it is very dull for Kate. Our hours do not suit her and the cooking does not agree with her. When the opportunity offered I was glad she took advantage of it for she would have been ill I think if she had remained. . . . Trust nothing I have said will alarm you.

Princess Catherine was not an ideal guest—not at Buttermilk Falls this summer. A year later, when she made a visit with her fiancé at the McDowell home, she was in better health and spirits.

Kate Chase craved movement, gaiety, gallantry, and a circle of attentive gentlemen about her. Doubtless she found what she desired at Saratoga. On her way to New York City, she completed her summer festivities with a visit at West Point, coming down by boat, after arranging with a friend in the city to meet and escort

her to the Astor House. Late in September, she was back in Washington, looking well, so her father thought. With her arrival we hear no more of his calls at the Cutts Mansion. Letters from Beverly came infrequently and were delivered at the Department. Secretary Chase settled back into his accustomed regimen of life under the rule of Princess Catherine.

## IX

### LOVE MAKING

WITH the return of the mistress, the ménage at Sixth and E Streets Northwest resumed its wonted round of dinners, receptions and matinees, all mixed with sweet morsels of love making. Kate Chase, by nature, was essentially a favorite of the opposite sex rather than her own. Women stood a good deal in awe of this haughty queen, who was all sufficient to herself. She awed them by her arrogant pride, even when she was most condescending. They admired her *savoir faire* and all instinctively stood back to get a better view of her costume when she entered a room. None was known to reach an intimate relation with Kate Chase.

With men it was different. She stimulated devotion from young and old, and preferred to converse with them rather than to chit chat with the ladies. Yet the men found something stand-offish and formidable in her queenly carriage, which both civilians and soldiers found difficult to overcome. He would be indeed bold to risk love making unless fortified by special claims upon her recognition through intellect, position or wealth. Governor Sprague possessed the last requisite in superlative degree. He was the richest man in New England. He pressed his suit persistently from the day of his introduction to Kate Chase.

That had come in Cleveland, in 1860, during the

Governors' Meeting. William Sprague rode at the head of the military parade, a slight figure on a prancing horse that set him off to the best advantage, for he was not a tall man. With right hand at salute, the alert rider glanced up in passing the Ohio Governor's box, where beside her father sat Kate, "a picture to linger in any man's eyes: wide hazel eyes melting into blue, hair brown with overtones of red-gold like a ripened corn-tassel in full sunlight," full low brows, mobile lips, small round chin, a daring tilt to the nose—a beauty charming if not classically perfect.

The Governor's daughter noticed the young man and asked, "Who is he?" On being told, Kate asked again, "Is he wealthy?" A revealing question indicating the girl's idea of a hero. Money constituted the primary essential in a prospective husband, without which nothing besides compensated. When assured that the "Boy Governor" was perhaps the richest magnate of the country, Kate was satisfied. The two were formally introduced at the ball that evening and they danced frequently. He was gallant and graceful and repeatedly they were on the floor together. It was growing late and the Chase party were impatient to leave, when Kate came tripping up on the arm of the Rhode Island Governor and begged to stay for one more dance. "What a charming man Governor Sprague is!" she remarked as the Columbus party left for home. She carried with her the image of this jocund cavalier, and he held her memory picture close to his heart.

Born September 11, 1830, William Sprague was ten years the senior of Kate Chase. His youthful appearance belied his years, though from boyhood heavy business responsibility had been laid upon his shoulders.



The history of the Sprague mercantile barony of New England during the 19th century reads like a story of the Middle Ages, when rulers over wide dominions had thousands of servitors dependent for their very existence upon the lord of the castle.

William Sprague, the Governor's grandfather, had founded cotton mills in various hamlets of Rhode Island and built dwellings for his operatives. Upon the death of his son, our William's father, the young boy of fifteen became prospective heir of a vast business. His schooling of a few months was ended. He was set to work by an uncle in the factory store to deal out supplies to employees. At the age of eighteen he was promoted to be head accountant of the house; at twenty-one an active partner in the firm; at twenty-six, his uncle having died, the young man became joint heir with his brother to this great property; virtually sole head, since Amasa took a negligible part in the business—a sporting man, his chief interest was race horses. William Sprague the third was the recognized chief of the Sprague Manufacturing Company, the biggest plant in New England.

The young magnate's hobby was military matters. As a lad during the Dorr Rebellion he had trained and marched forth a company of forty boys; at sixteen, he was a member of the Marine Artillery of Providence and was soon promoted to a captaincy. The pride of the town, he rode through the streets on his white horse, followed by his colored valet. To this day the older citizens of Providence point out the flight of stone steps that the young captain could vault at a leap.

At the age of twenty-nine, with health impaired, he sailed for Italy, visited battlefields, and met Garibaldi.

On his return he received a flattering ovation. A delegation of citizens met him at the boat-landing in New York, and escorted him to his home city, where a big parade had been arranged. Wearing a swagger military cloak and mounted on a splendid steed, the hero of the hour lifted his high hat to his cheering townsmen. The world was his, whatever he desired. Though without political knowledge and without a scintilla of experience, William Sprague was made candidate for the governorship of the State and was elected; a foregone conclusion, since money is power.<sup>1</sup>

Then came the opening of the War. His eager response, the reception in Washington, the favoritism of the President, all were more than enough to turn the head of an older and less emotional man than the Little Governor. If war were simply the display of perfection in parades, Captain Sprague might have continued to be the first favorite of Washington. But alas! he and his men marched gallantly off one summer day, only to return a few days later a scattered, broken regiment. The Boy Governor decided to devote his attention thereafter chiefly to business, politics, and love.

He was deeply in love with Kate Chase—as deeply as his nature allowed. He well knew she was his superior in education and intellect, though he hoped his wealth would offer a counterbalance. After two years and more of devotion and always under the spur of uncertainty as to his final success at the final lap, he won out. The announcement was made that Kate Chase was to marry Governor Sprague. "If they don't change their minds," said Mr. Chase to Jay Cooke, when the latter asked if

<sup>1</sup> "It is generally believed that the Messrs. Sprague spent \$100,000 and many think \$150,000 (single votes commanding as high as \$50.)" (R. G. Hazard to S. P. Chase, Apr. 10, 1860)

the report was true that the couple were to be married in the fall.

Society discussed the subject. Was it possible that Kate Chase, brilliant and dashing belle of Washington, had chosen among her host of admirers Governor Sprague, the weak if amiable cotton manufacturer of Providence? What was the father's mind concerning his adored daughter's choice? Did he protest against an apparent marriage of convenience to a man whose political pravity was well known, a man who had bought a governorship, and later his seat in the Senate? Did Secretary Chase suspect the personal record of this bachelor of thirty-three who had sown his wild oats? Did he know of an unsavory story that was whispered of his relations with the daughter of one of Rhode Island's oldest families; of a son he did not recognize? But that had been hushed up. A minor moral defect was Governor Sprague's drinking propensities. But this was an all-too-common fault. Everyone drank—everyone except Secretary Chase himself—and he acceded to the custom. That very summer of '63 he had put in his cellar a large order of wine amounting to \$120.<sup>2</sup>

What really was Secretary Chase's mind on the announced engagement? One member of the family says he did not know Governor Sprague's record and less his habits. This may be true, for Salmon P. Chase constitutionally was blind to his friends' faults. He thought well of them who thought well of him, and Governor Sprague gave the elder man flattering reverence. Truth to tell, the Secretary did have his doubts and fears as to Kate's future happiness. She was high-mettled and

<sup>2</sup> 2 dozen demijohns Madeira wine.

2 dozen demijohns Sherry.

needed a strong, firm hand over her, and her lover's was too indulgent and flabby. But could he prevent the match, once Katie had set her bit in the mouth? Never as yet had she failed to have her own way. After all, Katie would make "a good match." Governor Sprague was one of the richest men in the country.

Kate's ruling passion being ambition rather than love, her doubts and fears partook of a more worldly tone than those of her father; and she was led to ask herself what was to be her social status as the wife of William Sprague, Senator from Rhode Island. Would her enviable position as Queen of Washington be enlarged by the connection with the Calico King? Would she rule in Providence as in the Capital City? She would put the question to the test. In May, 1863, Kate and her father visited New England, which never yet failed to welcome its illustrious son. This occasion was to be no exception in courtesy. Boston and Newport gave the visitors adulatory welcome, and Providence outdid itself by tendering a reception to the Secretary and his daughter at the City Hotel, which the first families attended to pay their respects. Kate had no reason to doubt that her social sceptre would be supreme in this ancient caste-bound community. She reckoned without her host—as she later was to discover.

The orgy of indulgence had begun. Although the past year, the entire country had been in mourning and social life at a standstill, when disasters on the field of battle had caused men and women to give up festive entertainments—even a quiet game of cards—by the summer of '63, the high moral tone was relaxed. With the mania for quick wealth came wild expenditures and parallel indulgence. Society adopted the Epicurean



KATE CHASE, THE SECRETARY'S DAUGHTER



philosophy. Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die!

Kate Chase was not loth to join the merrymakers, and her fiancé was quite as willing to indulge her. On the contrary, Mr. Chase felt that excessive revelry was unbecoming to the people. His daughters were persuaded to refrain from taking part in the festive boat-launching they had been invited to attend. The regrets were penned by William Sprague:

New York, July 7, 1863. My dear Mr. Barney: I shall try to see you before you leave for the launch. Misses Kate and Nettie cannot join, as the former's health will not permit and it is thought that while the country is contemplating the great destruction of life, the name of Chase had better not be known in connection with a circumstance of semi-festivities. You will I know appreciate this old womanly view of Miss Kate and procure some other fair lady to perform the part allotted to her.

While complying with her father's wishes in the single instance, Kate Chase was not anticipating a sacrificial mode of life. She was planning for a magnificent wedding, and an extravagant trousseau, with two or more Paris gowns. If her father could not meet the bills, her husband could.

With the announcement of the betrothal, congratulations came in to the successful wooer from his friends. Hiram Barney of New York, who had helped along the affair by boosting Sprague to Secretary Chase, was given thanks for his good offices, through the following letter: "What shall I say to you? I thank you most heartily for all your kindness to me. The Gov. and Miss Katy have consented to take me into their fold. You have fought my battles. Let me always be ready to

fight yours, but you don't have them. Please congratulate *me*. Sincerely and truly yours, Wm. Sprague."

In exultant mood the engaged man wrote his prospective father-in-law a lengthy letter, following their separation for the summer and after Katy already had departed from Washington for the North to join her fiancé. The engaged couple's plans were set forth in Sprague's letters.

The summer was to be spent in pleasure jaunts. "Katy and her friends" were to be joined at Niagara by Mr. Sprague and his elder sister, then enjoy a yachting cruise along the Atlantic Coast. August was to find them at Newport. In November they were to be married and after the honeymoon settle in Washington. As to post-marital arrangements, Kate with her dominant decision, had disposed of her father's domestic future. 'Twas to go without saying, that the Secretary would remain a member of the young couple's family—Kate would consider nothing else. At the same time, she had no intention of being burdened by household cares: "Katy expresses a desire for temporary relief from the cares of housekeeping. She has formed plans in her own mind as to this which she will tell you." This plan, as revealed, called for the establishment of two separate home groups and yet only one. Nevertheless, all should be as the father desired—which really meant as Katie herself desired. The letter continues:

If more agreeable for us to be of your family, let it be so, we having separate arrangements so far as possible, such for instance as having our own carriage, horses, servants and privileges of as much of the pecuniary burden as possible, causing less interference with yourself, and so we could have our own connections—our own as far as possible.



The writer here injects the idea of the Secretary's possible retirement from office:

If you should leave Washington, which I hope is not possible our course would be clear as it is let us just arrange matters in a way as little objectionable to yourself as can & secondly let our welfare be consulted.

Having rather murkily "shadowed these plans," the writer closes this supreme epistolary effort with grateful appreciation of the gift which had been conferred upon him by the father:

Let me here, my dear sir, thank you from the bottom of my heart for the treasure you have reared and given to me. God bear me witness that it will be the object of my life to see that she receives no detriment in my hands. If a life of devotion to her and to yourself can make me worthy of it all, I shall deem it well spent. Gratefully yours

William Sprague.

The father responded with characteristic paternal counsel on the steering of the marital craft, with the warning to watch out for reefs and sandbars. His prospective son-in-law replies in a hopeful strain, after a courteous salutation. He reiterates his gratitude to the father for his "willingness to intrust that which is nearest and dearest" to the charge of another:

God helping, I shall accept the charge with renewed determination to see that your good opinion and anticipation are abundantly realized. Your council is timely. I do not, however, expect that all will at all times run smoothly, but I do expect that so far as human happiness can be arrived at, it can be attained by mutual interests, mutual forbearance, mutual love. It will, I think, be my fault if such is not the future of your daughter and myself. I shall gladly concur in whatever views your greater experience in such matters may decide for our domestic arrangements.

Affectionately and faithfully,

William Sprague.

The letter was painstakingly written, with spelling and penmanship at the writer's best. William Sprague was revealing a frank and noble nature, which must have been highly gratifying to Kate's father; the lover's pledges of fidelity predicted a happy future for darling Katie. Love, it appears, was giving William Sprague a moral uplift. He was making new resolutions. Referring to a pledge taken by an officer in the service to abstain from intoxicating liquors, the writer endorses the act, and confesses his own shortcomings. "I know that in my own life whatever of improprieties I may be charged with is from this cause."

The devoted lover gave up his summer to the pleasure of his fiancée. A yachting party made up of Kate, Nettie, and their cousin, Eliza Whipple, with Senator Sprague and his sister, Almyra, coasted along the Atlantic. Earlier in the season the engaged couple had taken a Hudson River trip, with a call at the McDowells' home at Buttermilk Falls, a jaunt that "worked very favorably to Kate's health."

While the young couple were frivolling away their *dolce far niente* Mr. Chase at his post in Washington, was enjoying his own quiet love-making with his dear friend, Mrs. Eastman of Beverly—always with mental reservations and only as far as his conscience allowed. This fond lady was in a less happy frame of mind than the previous summer. Her letters were more restrained and less frequent. In his prison house, the Treasury Building, he pictures her in her "castle" on the Atlantic, looking out of her library window upon the sails that float along the coast. He asks her why she has not written him these many days. She replies that it is because of jealousy:

I have a feeling nowadays that my letters to you can give but little satisfaction, as they can do nothing to advance the object for which it seems to me you live for—now shall I be frank? and perhaps offend you—and tell you I am jealous? and of whom and what? Of your ambition and through that, of yourself, for don't ambition make the worshipper the god of his own idolatry? I feel that if each of my letters could help you on one step to place and power, what satisfaction they would give, but as they are ineffectual, they are proportionately stupid, and only your amiability induces you to say they are acceptable. Am I not correct or am I a little insane? Is it not better to be frank? I prefer to know the true sentiments of my friends, the true state of everything connected with myself—even the saddest, the most heart-breaking calamity—'tis better to suffer acutely for a time than to live on a martyr to a flattering lie.

Such outspoken sentiments as these, coming from the woman who was suffering from unrequited love of him, gave Mr. Chase food for meditation in the quiet of the night time. Was his ambition smothering the natural impulses of love and tenderness towards this very dear friend? Here was a sweet woman devoted to him; why not make her supremely happy and himself also? No one could make objection—no one except Kate. His sister-in-law urged him to marry.<sup>3</sup> Yes, good Kate Whiteman was right, he should marry, but there was another Kate who thought differently about it.

It was an excellent time to marry. Kate was soon to be provided for, Nettie was still in school in New York City. He was free to set up his own establishment. But no, it would not do. Unpleasant complications would arise. He must sacrifice his happiness to Kate's desires. Moreover, he could not at this time afford the luxury

<sup>3</sup> "Dear Brother: I do so much wish that you would get married—do—there are so many elegant ladies in and about Washington who will make affectionate and excellent wives—(Will you pardon me for writing the above?)"

Kate Ludlow Whiteman.

of a wife and a separate establishment. The upshot was that he agreed to Katie's plan. Senator Sprague was to purchase the Mansion on E and Sixth Northwest, as he "would never live in another man's house." Secretary Chase was to live with Kate and her husband, to pay a fixed sum for board when present, and one-half the amount when absent. Everything was decided before Kate returned to Washington, and Governor Sprague wired to that effect.

At the same time, Chase was entertaining the hope of getting away from Washington, quitting official life, and returning to Cincinnati. He went so far as to engage rooms with his friends the Carters. He did not accomplish his desire. He remained near his darling Katie, as she planned he should.

## X

### WEDDING AND HONEYMOON

NOVEMBER the twelfth, Eighteen Sixty-three dawned. The ceremony of marriage between William Sprague and Catherine Chase was to be performed at eight-thirty in the evening. New York read the announcement sent from Washington in the column headlined: *The Starvation of Union Prisoners—Dedication of the Gettysburg Cemetery—The Command of the Department of Washington—Collectors Deposits to be in United States Currency. . . . Senator Sprague's Marriage.*<sup>1</sup>

Fifty guests had been invited to the ceremony, five hundred to the reception. All arrangements were completed. The bridesmaids had been at the Chase mansion some days to attend pre-nuptial parties: Nettie from her school in New York, Miss Skinner, Kate's cousin, and Miss Nichols, niece of Senator Sprague. The groomsmen, all officers of the army, were Major Baldwin, Captain Ives, and Captain Haven. For several days guests had been arriving in Washington and crowding the hotels.<sup>2</sup> Parcels heavy with gold and silver had been delivered, gifts variously estimated to be worth from sixty to one hundred thousand dollars.<sup>3</sup> The re-

<sup>1</sup> *New York Tribune*, Nov. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Accommodations for forty guests from the city of Providence alone have been engaged at Willards (*New York Times*, Nov. 12).

<sup>3</sup> The value of the gifts is estimated at over \$60,000 (*New York Times*).

puted price of Senator Sprague's gift to the bride was \$50,000. The wealthy mercantile connections of the Rhode Island magnate had been generous in their testimonials to the bride. Among the less conspicuous of the presents was a beautiful fan, the gift of President Lincoln to Kate, dainty and appropriate for her small hand.

The social world over the country was all agog with excitement to learn the least detail about this wonderful wedding. A pleasant variation this, from the horrors of war, the starving prisoners, the sick and dying in hospitals—"such a carnival of blood" as had not been "in a score of centuries." The conflict was reaching a high point of suspense, with every ounce of strength needed to turn the tide. There must be no holding back in this critical hour, no rebelling against the draft.

Every young man who seeks an honorable future, who cares to figure in the grandest drama of the century . . . who has soul enough to realize how sacred a thing is patriotism, should hasten to the help of his country in this last decisive grapple with the monster treason, now as never before desperate.<sup>4</sup>

A tragic hour in the country's history was that on which Kate Chase was to be married. The evening previous, one read as he pored over the latest returns: "Rebels Driving to Culpeper—Midnight Battle—Brilliant Victory over Longstreet." The eye moves to depressing lines: "Richmond forced to halve the rations of Northern Prisoners."

The fate of the land was hanging in the balance. The figures of this Dance of Death whirl before one's mind. Mr. Lincoln turned his tired eyes to the map to trace

<sup>4</sup> *New York Times*, Nov. 13.

the movements of his soldiers. One week more and he would be at Gettysburg to pronounce his immortal speech. Tonight he was weary and not in the mood for gayety and mirth. Still, he must attend the wedding of his Secretary's daughter to the Little Governor who played so dashing a part at the opening of the conflict, and later gave freely of his wealth to sustain the men. Tonight, the grief-worn President must attend a marriage and mingle with a gay throng, as he would mingle, a week hence, with sorrow stricken mourners. He drove unescorted to the Chase home. Mrs. Lincoln, still in mourning for her son, was not with him.

Crowds of curious filled the streets at the corner. Mr. Lincoln alighted from his carriage, walked over matting leading to the door and joined the guests. Members of the Cabinet, Senators, Foreign Ministers, British and French Legations, celebrities from far and near—the whole world was there. The Bridal March announced the approach of the wedding party. A queenly figure in white velvet with long train moved down the handsome staircase. Across the bride's forehead a parure of priceless pearls and diamonds in orange blossom design, the gift of the groom, held the filmy lace veil in place.<sup>5</sup> Her attendants followed, the maids in colorful costume, the groomsmen resplendent in military uniform. The groom joined the party. The bride's father stood near to give away his daughter. The Bishop slowly advanced and in solemn tones read the marriage vows. They were repeated by Catherine Chase and William Sprague, who thereby became man and wife.

<sup>5</sup> The portrait of Kate Chase Sprague in wedding costume was displayed throughout the coming winter in a prominent window of a Pennsylvania Avenue bookstore.

Relatives and friends crowded forward to offer congratulations. The Marine Band in an unseen alcove played the *Kate Chase Wedding March* which had been composed for the occasion.<sup>6</sup> All was gayety and merriment. The enormous dining-room had been cleared for dancing. The bride led off in the lancers with the friend who had introduced Governor Sprague to her in Cleveland in the Spring of '60.<sup>7</sup> The collation was served. To each guest was given a dainty box of wedding cake to dream upon. Everything had proceeded according to long established custom. The Chase mansion was at last quiet, and the lights were out upon the first scene of the new domestic drama.

Four blocks away at the Ford Theater, J. Wilkes Booth on that very evening had produced the comedy, "Money," by Bulwer-Lytton. The plot involves a stratagem to prove if the love on which is to rest the happiness of an entire life is to be given to the Money or to the Man. More than one in the audience found sinister import in thus bringing to mind the mockery of wealth, when at the same hour, barely a stone's throw away, wedding festivities costing a fortune were

<sup>6</sup> An American poet of the day, Joel Benton, wrote verses: *Epithalamium*.

Wind of summer, soft and sweet,  
Blowing up the coast today,  
Kissing all the snowy fleet  
In and out the silver bay—  
Waft up joy on rosy feet—  
Fan all clouds and care away.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sing, O Bird, the hero's praise,  
Bird of splendor, do your best;  
He who holds henceforth as his  
The fairest girl in all the West;  
Make, O Fate, his future bliss  
Greater than he ever guessed.

*New York Independent*, Nov. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Richard G. Parsons.



going on. The parallelism of subject, characters, and lines is striking. Both stages are set "in fine houses, with fine servants who serve fine dinners." The economic philosophy of the bride and groom finds expression in the lines of the dramatist: "Retrench—Nothing so plebeian! Worse than plebeian! it is against all the rules of public morality. Everyone knows nowadays that extravagance is a benefit to the population—encourages art, employs labor and multiplies spinning jennies." A meretricious doctrine which found little credence among the masses.

The same evening, while the Chase-Sprague wedding and the Ford Theater program were being conducted for the delectation of their respective audiences, down on the East Side of New York, in a Bowery hall, another scene of a different character was being enacted. Hundreds of working women, sad-eyed and gaunt from hunger, had gathered to send up a wail of protest against the starvation wages grudgingly doled out to them. They could no longer exist on the two-dollar-a-week wage. "Once they lived upon this pittance and made no sign—wringing from it house rent, clothing, winter fire, food, medicine. Now they must cry out in their agony or perish." At least one newspaper man caught the significance of the contrasting pictures as presented at Sixth and E Streets, Washington, and that in the dingy East Side hall, New York. "Since the marriage of Aladdin with the Princess Badourah, opulence woven from air and heaped up by Djinnns. . . . Wealth and power were striking hands. . . . The prosperous lust that lavishes \$50,000 on magnificent paraphernalia deals out to these sisters of hers an average income of

\$2 a week.”<sup>8</sup> Truly, November the twelfth, Anno Domini 1863, presents startling contrasts in the economic status of American citizens.

Whether or not the bride had her conscience pricked by the pathetic poverty of her “sisters,” is dubious at this time, when she was exhilarated by the wine of wealth. Her father in the solitude of his home following her departure on the honeymoon was offered opportunity to ponder on the incongruous contrast in human lives. As if to drive home to his soul the arrow of remorse, one of his former constituents wrote him a scathing reminder:

Nov. 12, 1863. Gov.—I listen to the clock; it is striking eight. At this hour on this eve, if I may believe public rumor you should be supremely happy, for you are about to launch your child into the world surrounded by every luxury and comfort. While this is passing in your house what is passing in mine? There lie my little ones (equally dear to me as your daughter to you) on a pallet, on the floor, for God help me, their father having no bedstead for himself has none for them.

Great preparations for the home-coming of Rhode Island’s favorite son and his bride had been made in the Sprague home on Young Orchard Avenue, Providence. Invitations galore had been sent to the new rich and to the quality folk as well, the people with grandfathers and the people with none. “Madame Fanny,” as Senator Sprague’s mother was familiarly called, was not stingy. One of her old servants remarks, “She could entertain five hundred people beautiful.” On this, the grandest festival ever given in her home, the Gover-

<sup>8</sup> *New York World*, Nov. 16, 1863, Editorial, *The Wail of the Workwomen*.



SENATOR WILLIAM SPRAGUE



nor's mother had expended much effort and money. William and Kate were to have a truly royal reception.

As the wedding party approached the house they could see from a distance the brilliantly illuminated grounds. Lanterns were swinging from every tree, "every branch had its light." Over the gateway an arch, wound with red, white and blue, bore in huge gilt letters the word, *Welcome*. The front porch was one immense canopy of flags and streamers. Over the door had been arranged a combination of the coats of arms of all nations—as though this were an international affair. These "overwhelming" decorations, better suited to the commemoration of martial victory than nuptial triumph, were not gratifying to the exquisite taste of the bride. This tawdry exhibition, in such striking contrast to the elegance of her wedding appointments, struck an unpleasant tone from her first entrance to her mother-in-law's home. Suffice to say, that she soon got the ear of her husband, and the flags were hauled down.<sup>9</sup>

This unfortunate beginning somewhat dampened the spirits of the bridal party, most of all, Kate. She was getting her first impressions of the Sprague family, of which she now was a member. The reaction was not altogether agreeable. She suddenly felt ill. "A little fatigued," as her husband put it in writing to his father-in-law. But as the evening progressed, she became herself again; while Nettie, chatty, happy, and gay, enjoyed it all hugely. This little sixteen-year-old half-sister, full of grace and charm, "bade fair to

<sup>9</sup> Gen. F., one of the wedding party, thought the preparations suggested "a horse fair"; "The gaudy things were taken away from the front of the house as well as the rooms inside & everything arranged satisfactorily at last." Alice Skinner to S. P. Chase.

eclipse" the lustrous Kate—so the bridegroom risked saying to her father.

In the receiving line were the bishops of Rhode Island, both the Episcopal and the Catholic prelates, for, as we are told, the "Spragues were not bigoted." From the stairway above, the housemaids peeped through the balustrades to see the bride, who reminded them of a marble statue, so pale and fair, with a smile, gracious though proud. She turned her head slowly and looked about her. She glanced down the long room at the sea of faces. All were unfamiliar. Where were her friends? Where her beloved "Kinnie," Cornelia Arnold Talbot, her school-girl chum? Where was Governor Hoppin, who gave her father and herself so cordial a welcome only six months previously? Why were the Rhode Island blue-bloods not here to welcome her? The aristocrats of Providence had extended a flattering hand to her as the daughter of Secretary Chase; they refused to recognize the wife of Senator Sprague.

The bride, without knowledge of the psychology back of this social boycott, was unable to understand why she was not receiving the honor due her as the wife of a prominent citizen, a Senator and an ex-governor of the State. Politically he was favored with high position, socially he was turned down. The explanation, one learns, lies in the brief sentence, "The Spragues never were received socially." The old families did not invite them, neither would they accept their invitations. If one presses for a further cause, he is told of the prejudice against the Governor's tribal traits. "The truth of the matter is, Governor Sprague never had the manners of a gentleman, only the veneer of refinement, and in a mental lapse might put his feet upon

a rose satin chair. That was a Sprague trick—they all did it." One suspects, too, that the reason for the ostracism went deeper than mere manners, that it struck the bedrock of moral discrimination. The tragic story of the daughter of one of the most highly respected families in Providence was tied up with William Sprague. The older generation did not forget or forgive.

The honeymoon journey included a trip to Ohio to visit the bride's relatives and friends at her birthplace, Cincinnati, there again to astonish all beholders by her bewildering trousseau, worthy of a queen and filling, we doubt not, as many trunks as a queen's. Kate was soon satisfied with what the Western city could offer, and next turned her avid eyes towards New York, where she might be confident of a fashionable reception from her many friends and acquaintances. She was thinking anxiously of her father back in Washington, sitting alone in his empty house, poring over his accounts and preparing his annual report. Her mind was dwelling on his future. Away from the Capital City, Kate could gain a perspective of the unfriendly elements in the administration working against him, members of the Cabinet and the President himself. Of Mr. Lincoln's good will she was reassured, after reading her father's last letter to her.

She delegates the writing of the reply to her ever obedient and obliging husband. He opens by disabusing Mr. Chase's mind of any least doubt as to their marital felicity, then launches into the subject of politics:

I am delighted that you see brighter future for us, as I have known that you trembled a little for that which was yet a solution of that which was to come. We are happy. We feel we have it upon a foundation which will not give way. With

God on our side and the ever watchful eye & counsel of one so dearly loved we share with you, that misfortune can never come, tho trials may. I am glad to know you speak so of Katie's anxiety for your future, and I am doubly glad to know you speak of your connection with Mr. Lincoln. Could that paragraph find its way into print as from you, it would destroy the effect of the whole bitter work of Seward, Blair, Lincoln & Co.'s attack upon you. We have both taken colds. I am quite over mine. Katie holds to hers but will relinquish it later. You know she is very tenacious of everything. Faithfully & affectionately

Wm. Sprague.

While in New York City, the newly-weds called upon Henry Ward Beecher, who had just returned from his speaking tour in England, in the interest of the North. Beecher and Chase had been friends for many years, since their young manhood days in Cincinnati. On this December day in 1863, in the minister's Brooklyn home, undoubtedly he recounted his varied experience while abroad and Kate listened politely, then introduced the subject nearer home, and nearest her heart, that of the political outlook for the coming presidential nomination of the succeeding year. That this was the topic uppermost in her mind is shown by a letter Secretary Chase wrote his daughter at this time, in reply to one her husband had sent him. What was his opinion concerning the choice of a candidate? "I think a man of different qualities from those of the President will be needed for the next four years. I am not anxious to be regarded as that man." Kate's anxiety was exactly the reverse. Her will was set to bring him into the ring—and she was "very tenacious of everything." Her husband had discovered this primary trait.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> During her honeymoon she lived in a fantasy world, dreaming of her father's future, when by all the laws of God and man she should have been absorbed in her husband, and his future. She could not free herself from her first love, her father.



While Kate and her husband were sounding out the situation outside of Washington, Secretary Chase was occupying his mind with more immediate and pressing problems. He was balancing the Government's budget and scanning his personal checking account. The year had proved a severe strain not only on the purse-strings of the Treasury Department, but also on the Secretary's private pocketbook. From the beginning of the war, in season and out, he had preached economy to the people while he himself was unable to practice it. And now at the end of the year '63, the debit side of the column far exceeded the credit. After deducting his running expenses of the house, his property and personal income tax, he found himself with about \$2,000—not sufficient to cover the cost of Kate's trousseau.<sup>11</sup>

The wedding expenditures doubled the amount: the bridesmaids' gifts, the cards, the music, the decorations, the collation including the cake and wines, made the total cost of the marriage celebration exceed \$4,000. How could he meet these demands? His checking account in bank was overdrawn \$150.98. And his creditors at this particular time of strain appear to have been moved to press for payment of old debts—here is a year-old dressmaker's bill, and here, a request from a poor artist asking payment for the daughter's portrait and closing with the complimentary words, "Hope you'll be our next President."

Again he turned his harassed brain to his Department's exchequer and puzzled over the country's debts. How was he to raise the millions required daily to carry

<sup>11</sup> Mme. Hermantine Duriez, patronized by the Queen of Spain, had forwarded a bill of 4809 francs for wedding gown; Mme. Vigoroux and Mme. Baillard of \$329.70 and \$654.50, respectively; Arnold Constable of \$521.27.

on the war? For many days and nights he devoted himself exclusively to the preparation of the annual report. He had refused all invitations—all save one for Thanksgiving dinner, for which his friend, Henry Cooke, had succeeded in gaining acceptance. The Secretary spent the day in the luxurious Cooke home in Georgetown. Otherwise, the month of solitude was unbroken. And now Katie would soon be home, eager to start in on her season's social campaign, which was to prove to be a political campaign as well.

## XI

### FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

**B**Y right, the Chase mansion which had been rented by the Secretary, hereafter, should have been called the Sprague residence. Negotiations for the purchase, begun several months before the wedding, were later concluded, thus making good the Senator's declaration that he never would live in another man's house. The Secretary, now nominally a boarder, virtually still remained the head of the house, for William Sprague, with little liking for formal functions, naturally dropped into a subordinate place "in the shadow of greatness"—as one put it. Kate with the added prestige of a matron assumed a higher status than before.

Seemingly, the new two-in-one household mechanism was working smoothly. Early in January, Chase wrote his sister, Helen Chase Walbridge: "Kate seems very happy. She and her husband seem to love each other dearly. He is a noble fellow and I love him almost as much as she does." A triangular love feast, so it appeared. However, it was too soon to prognosticate the future harmony of the newly-weds. As for the Secretary, now at the age of fifty-six and past the meridian of life, it was more than apparent that he had entered the Castle of Loneliness. If he could have followed his desires, he would have retired from public life and spent his remaining years quietly in his own home with a wife

and friends about him. While Kate and her husband were in Providence for a few days and he alone in the big house with the servants, his thoughts turned to his women friends.

On a quiet evening before the open grate, he gave himself the pleasure of writing them. He wishes Susan Walker were in Washington,<sup>1</sup> and much more does he desire to see Mrs. Eastman, his dear Carlotta, or as he prefers to call her, Lotty. He does not know her whereabouts, she has eluded him these last months since receiving the rebuff courteous from the dominant daughter. The lady thereafter wrote infrequently, and charged that the letters be destroyed which he reluctantly acceded to. But he had no notion of cutting the friendship off.<sup>2</sup> He wrote:

My very Dear Friend:—Your letter came Saturday night. It is my habit (a bad one) to read after retiring; so I took your letter with me to inspire my dreams; and really I had a very curious one. I dreamed there was to be a marriage, and that Katie and I were invited to witness it. . . .

I received no letter, I think, from you from Cassville but I prize your letters too much to notice the dates, & it is possible that it did come; and in obedience to your injunctions—which please revoke—was destroyed. No, indeed I do not forget you; nor am I likely to forget. I think of you constantly; and if any feeling is left in me, with the sincerest affection. We have been friends a long time and I hope shall be better friends instead of worse.

The letter is closed with a charge to write soon and “as affectionately as your conscience will permit” and

<sup>1</sup> Miss Walker, at the time, was nursing in a Union camp in the South.

<sup>2</sup> The acquaintance dates back to Kate's last year in school in New York, when Mrs. Eastman acted as the young girl's chaperone, on a shopping expedition and a trip to Philadelphia to hear the actor Talma.

is signed temperately "Your friend"—as ardent a term as *his* conscience would permit.

Some months previously, the lovely widow had responded to his expressed desire to be with her, thus: "Nothing would give me more pleasure than to see you, if but for a moment, knowing the pleasure reciprocated; for my heart is like the chameleon's skin, partaking of the color of what it comes in contact with." Henceforth, the pale rose of affection, not the blood red of passion, must regulate the love pulse. The dominant daughter had decreed that she herself was to remain the reigning queen in her father's heart and never again would he dare to rouse her Majesty's jealousy. In a few days she would be back in Washington, crowned and sceptred, exercising her dynamic power over him and drawing him into the maelstrom of society and the intrigues of politics.

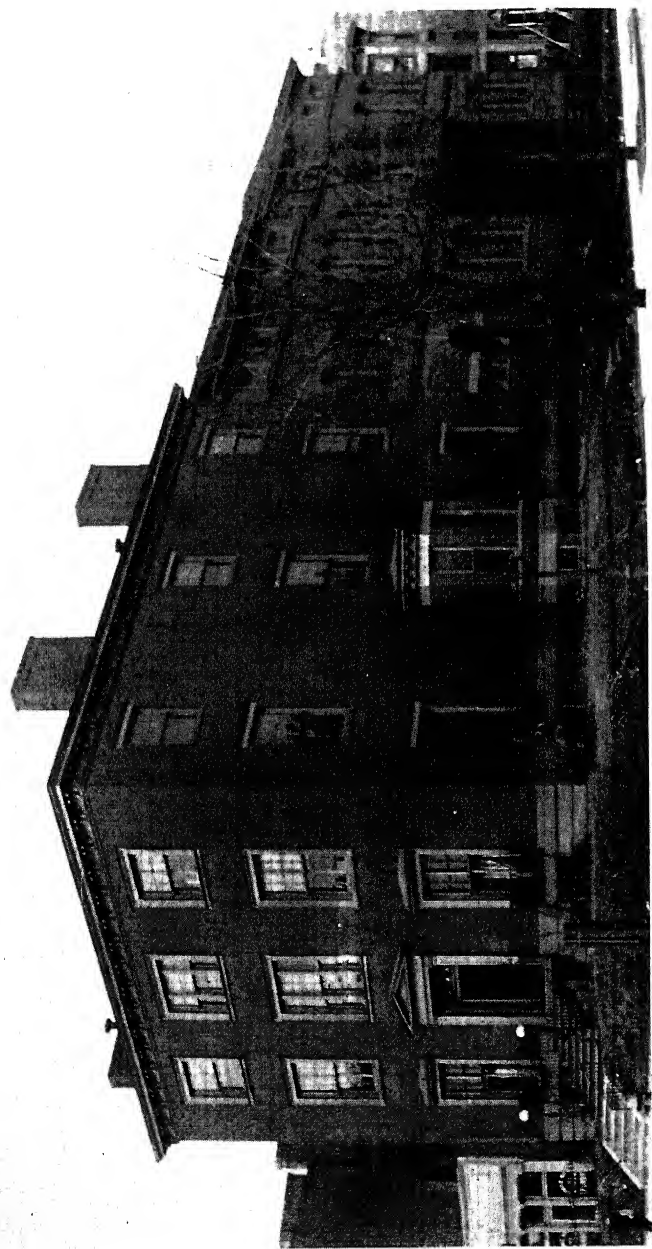
The season had already opened. The whole official world seemed moved to entertain, in spite of the uncertainty of the war. Mrs. Lincoln emerged from the shadow of her mourning and resumed her receptions and matinees. Secretary Seward and Speaker Colfax each gave a fashionable affair. Everything was done on a more elaborate scale than before as if to shake off the tedium of War.

"Mrs. Senator Sprague," as she solecistically was titled, entertained more lavishly than ever with receptions, dances, dinners, all famous for the perfection of their appointments. The saying of the Greeks, "In nothing too much," never could be applied appropriately to Kate; she excelled in prodigality, though not with the abandon of display exhibited by the par-

venus and war profiteers. With her husband's long-time reputation of great wealth, she could safely throw discretion to the winds; now her least desire could be gratified, since he was her devoted servitor. Mrs. Sprague's hospitality, however, had a significance beyond superficial show. It was made to serve her absorbing purpose in the promotion of her ambition. She had a vision of increased power through money, thinking it a magic carpet on which she and her father might be carried to the place where she dreamed of being, the White House.

Those who sat at the Sprague's table that winter were led into channels of talk different from the usual casual chit chat over the wine glass. Under the guidance of a hostess of infinite finesse, men found themselves scrutinizing world affairs and the home situation, civil and military; what was the attitude of England towards the North? What was the feeling throughout the country on the conduct of the War? What was the consensus of opinion in the army regarding the Commander in Chief? Elsewhere, parlor conversation was confined to lighter topics, presumably better suited to the feminine mind—the latest opera, the wonders of spiritualism, or perchance the eloquent Anna Dickinson's lectures, to which topics Kate Chase Sprague gave a quick touch and go and passed on to the political theme. Eighteen-sixty-four was presidential campaign year, and the race was about to be run.

As early as January, consideration was being given to the time and place of the coming national conventions and to the eligible candidates; Frémont clubs were springing up in the West; Union (Republican) Party men were on the alert to gain ground for Chase; while



THE CHASE-SPRAGUE MANSION  
Sixth and E Streets Northwest, Washington, D. C.





defenders of the Administration were girding to battle for Lincoln. The press of the country was taking definite stand in favor of one or another of the candidates. One editor, looking towards the Chase nomination, urged coöperation among his adherents: "Friends of Mr. Lincoln are exerting themselves to turn and concentrate public sentiment in his favor; your friends ought to be equally vigilant." And they were, for as soon as State legislatures drew up resolutions recommending Lincoln for reëlection, the Chase men hastened to forestall such action. In Ohio, on the eve of the day the vote was to be taken, R. C. Parsons rushed down to Columbus to prevent the final action and succeeded in postponing the passing of the resolution. In Indiana the tide of public opinion for Lincoln was reported to be much abated. In the South and West, New Orleans and San Francisco, Chase agents were active. In New York, the Secretary of the Union Club, after drawing up a platform, sent it to Chase, with the intimation that the writer's appointment as Collector of his Congressional District would be a politic move.

Kate Chase Sprague was the central spider in the web. She made it the business of her life to establish cordial relations with her father's influential friends, a not difficult task with her beauty, wit and charm. Senators and representatives were alike eager for her good will and willing to promise aid. To James Hamilton, of New York, she presented photographs of herself and of her father—both were fond of having their pictures taken, as may be inferred from their frequent visits to the portrait artists.

These favors Kate distributed among her Court favorites, chief among them being the political wire-pullers

and monied aristocracy of New York.<sup>3</sup> When a delegation of financiers came down to Washington on bank business Mrs. Sprague entertained them at dinner, including as guests prominent legislators and army officers, Sherman, Garfield, Moorhead. Through these complimentary courtesies, all who left her presence were more or less bound to the Chase chariot. Rare was the instance when the magic of her method failed to work. One such instance is related<sup>4</sup> as having occurred during the first weeks of the winter of '64. A certain Parson Granville, chaplain of an Ohio regiment, chancing to be in Washington for a day or so, was invited to take breakfast at the mansion on Sixth and E Streets Northwest. He arrived an hour early, at seven-thirty, and was ushered into Mr. Chase's dressing-room, where he was making his toilet.

"You'll excuse me if I go on shaving," the Secretary said, as he continued, keeping up a running conversation with his guest meanwhile. "A number of my friends are coming to breakfast also this morning. I hope you will tell them how the men in blue feel about Mr. Lincoln." The parson made no answer. At 8:30 a large party sat down to one of Kate's famous breakfasts—she knew the influence of delicious hot breads and coffee. Mr. Chase asked the good chaplain to say grace, and the latter thereupon took occasion to lengthen it out by telling the Almighty how completely beloved and believed in was Abraham Lincoln. There was no

<sup>3</sup> Early in '63, Secretary Chase had devised the national-bank system, whereby any group of five men with a capital of \$300,000 might be granted a charter by the government and allowed to issue bank notes up to the value of 90% of the bonds, the Treasury Dept. assuming responsibility of paying the notes if the bank failed.

<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Joseph Benson Foraker in *I Would Live It Again*.

further inquiry concerning the sentiment of the soldiers on their commander-in-chief.

For three years Secretary Chase had carried on the task of raising funds for the War so ably that he had won a host of admirers throughout the nation, but he had made enemies as well. Heading the list of Chase detractors were the Blairs, Francis Preston Blair and his sons, Montgomery <sup>5</sup> and Francis P. Blair, Jr., who united in fighting to destroy the Secretary of the Treasury's prestige, to poison Lincoln's mind against Chase, and break down his unblemished reputation. Up to the present their efforts had produced little effect upon the President, who ever refused to join the Haters Club. As for Chase, his religion forbade the nursing of ill-will through speech. "Say what you please kindly of your friends, but keep a bridle on the lips when you talk of those you do not like so well," he once wrote a friend, and he acted consistently with the advice.

The Secretary bowed his head in silence under the Blair abuse, while his fiery daughter, angered against these defamers of her father's good name, denounced the whole Comus Crew and sought an available weapon against them. For him to win the supreme position of power would exorcize their evil spell as nothing else. He must be pushed the harder into the presidency, he deserved it and never of himself would reach the eminence. When Chase was urged for an expression of his desire for the nomination, he disavowed personal interest in it, unless it were granted "unanimously" by a grateful people; but in spite of verbal denial, he permitted his daughter and his friends to intrigue in his behalf; and while they were organizing a mass move-

<sup>5</sup> Postmaster General.

ment he was passively disintegrating it by dilatory tactics and postponement of his endorsement. A positive yea or nay he seemed incapable of giving—a life-long weakness of this great man. An old teacher<sup>6</sup> of his, writing him at this time, gives testimony to the fine scholarship of the young lad, recalling that he once had told young Chase that he was capable of making a man of note and wealth if he could say No at the right time, when the other boys were coaxing him to follow them.<sup>7</sup> Now, after forty years, Chase found it easier to follow the leader than to give a downright refusal.

Ambition and conscience were at warfare; while one was pushing him forward, the other was holding him back; he had scruples against “doing anything detrimental to another man’s prospects for the sake of the Presidency.” This double-mindedness made it difficult to further his candidacy for if the general will not lead, the soldiers must take the initiative. The opening bomb of the campaign was exploded on February 21, through the “Pomeroy Bulletin,” a circular opposing the renomination of Lincoln and setting forth the claims of Chase for the succession. The press was astounded; one editor reported that Mr. Chase had resigned, another declared that he had not been cognizant of the proceedings, and a third verified the latter statement. “We are authorized by a distinguished friend of Mr. Chase that he denies knowledge of the circular. We doubted the genuineness of the document and are glad to be able to state that the whole thing is a hoax.” It was not a hoax, but a serious document; true in this, how-

<sup>6</sup> The Rev. Z. G. Barstow of Keene, N. H., who prepared young Chase for entrance to Dartmouth.

<sup>7</sup> Appendix: *The Pomeroy Bulletin*.

ever, that Secretary Chase himself knew nothing of its publication till a friend showed him a copy. Was Kate Chase Sprague within the secret of this premature propaganda and approving of Senator Pomeroy's precipitancy in so early broadcasting the campaign literature? Her rash temerity of temperament might easily have pushed her into acquiescence in the action; at any rate, history has put blame upon her for the fiasco, that was the cause of injuring the good name of Salmon P. Chase more than any other thing throughout his political career.

The Pomeroy Bulletin went out under the Congressional franking privilege by the thousands, and was copied in as many more thousand newspapers from East to West. The repercussion was instantaneous. It was the sensation of the day. Chase advocates deplored it, his enemies exulted over it. He might well on this day have prayed to be delivered from his friends, who had unwittingly betrayed him into the hands of his enemies; still, in their defense, his managers might have pleaded as reason for taking the conduct of his campaign into their hands, his own dallying tactics and indecision. He now was in a most embarrassing dilemma, not knowing how to extricate himself. Lincoln at last, had in black and white what for several months he had surmised and feared, that his Secretary was hoping to supersede him. Many nights that winter had the harassed President threshed out the situation with a confidant,<sup>8</sup> trying in vain to work out a satisfactory solution in meeting the cabal. Now his opponent had quashed the quandary and destroyed himself.

What was Mr. Chase now to do; how set himself

<sup>8</sup> Alexander K. McClure.

right again with the President? His first thought was to offer a defense in person before Mr. Lincoln, but fearful of the reception, he sent instead a letter. Finally, however, on the advice of Horace Greeley, he called at the White House and face-to-face explained to the President his own ignorance of the manifesto, which had been circularized by the committee without consulting him. Lincoln accepted the apology with his usual tolerance, saying that one could not be held responsible for the faults of his friends, and the incident was closed as far as he was concerned. But the Chase conscience gave him no peace; he could now restore his self-respect only by recanting all intention of ambition in attempting to supplant his Chief, and the last day of February, Secretary Chase wrote James Hamilton, one of his pushers in New York: "It would be entirely agreeable to me to have my name withdrawn from all consideration of the Presidency; and to be permitted to pursue my labors undisturbed. I have often resolved to write a letter for the public information asking that it might be so withdrawn." In spite of resolutions to make public his determination to withdraw his name, his courage hitherto had failed him—Kate was behind his chair paralyzing his pen.

Meantime, his enemies were preparing their final attack, in a deadly volley of "villainous saltpetre." During the last days of April, Frank P. Blair, Major-general and Congressman from Missouri, vented his spleen against the Secretary of the Treasury, in one of the boldest and bitterest assaults ever pronounced in the halls of Congress. For two hours he battered away on the character of Chase, charging him with corruption in high office, with treason, with grasping at power and

patronage for carrying on his "war against the administration which gave him place."

"Are you aware of rumors afloat regarding the Secretary?" Blair shouted angrily. "Have you heard that he has given to his son-in-law, Sprague, a permit to buy cotton at the South, by which he will probably make the snug little sum of \$2,000,000?" Blair then launched into the Pomeroy Circular scandal, declaring Chase's lack of sincerity in his withdrawal as a candidate. "Nobody is simple enough to believe that the distinguished Secretary has really retired from the canvas for nomination."

Fraud and corruption simultaneously were charged against the Treasury Department; that certain of the Secretary's employees had been proven thieves and adulterers, and that he had winked at the crimes; and also, so it was said, winked at Senator Sprague's illicit profiteering in cotton for the benefit of his calico printing mills in Rhode Island. The most noxious of virulent charges against Salmon P. Chase,—that of venality in office which struck at his honor, his dearest possession,—now made his position intolerable; for with the shattering of public esteem, the loyalty of his defenders was put to a severe test, his standing as a cabinet member, the most important, barring but one, had been shaken. He waited in vain for defense from his colleagues. He felt hurt and wronged by the President's tacit approval of the Blair onslaught—by a coincidence, Major-General Blair's military commission was renewed on the day following his speech. To add to the Secretary's humiliation, his Katie's name had been used in connection with the political scandal, and blame had been attached to her for her part in the movement, greatly

to her father's distress, for his "earnest wish" was that she should "keep entirely aloof from everything connected with politics"—as impossible a restraint as to stop her breathing.

Upon the announcement of his willingness to give up his office, a general protest was raised against his retirement. "Do not, I beg of you, resign and thus abandon the ship," one wrote. "Your resignation would now cast gloom and despondency over the entire land among all loyal men, and I fear lead to general despair, anarchy and ultimate ruin." Nevertheless, in spite of remonstrances, Secretary Chase sent a letter to the President asking to be relieved, though he did not expect the resignation would be accepted. Twice before, within the past two years, he had made the same request and each time he had been coaxed to remain. This time his plea was granted, and so quickly it fairly took his breath away. He was thunderstruck, and Kate was no less amazed and indignant that Lincoln should allow the retirement of her father, his most able assistant. Charles Sumner called upon his old friend to offer condolences, and reminded him that he might be recalled, as the French Finance Minister, Necker, a century before, had been brought back after having been dismissed. Mr. Chase saw no analogy in the two cases. He replied, "Lincoln is no Louis the Sixteenth,"—the sincerest compliment he ever paid the President.

The happiness and well-being of the Chase-Sprague family, which opened so exuberantly during the first days of the year, slumped alarmingly during the spring of 1864. Chase was frequently ill and his nerves were frayed, as his friends had occasion to remark. Lincoln observed that his Secretary was "irritable, uncomfort-



able . . . never perfectly happy unless he is thoroughly miserable." Kate's health, too, temporarily gave way, causing both father and husband anxiety, and Senator Sprague took her for a cruise along the upper Atlantic; after which, the summer found her at Narragansett Pier and Newport prepared to play her part as social sovereign. But she was not in her best form and fettle; she had been thwarted in her deepest desire and ambition and was desperately disappointed; nevertheless, she was not yet ready to show the white feather. Kate Chase had not yet given up the hope of foisting her father's name upon a campaign banner; with many of her New York friends she still indulged the fantasy of running Salmon P. Chase on an independent ticket.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> By almost unanimous vote, Lincoln had been chosen by the Union Republicans at the Baltimore Convention of June 7.

## XII

### A PRIVATE CITIZEN

**S**ALMON PORTLAND CHASE accepted his downfall with his wonted Christian submission. He suffered, nevertheless, from the thought that his service to his country had been repudiated and himself maligned. "I have toiled hard and patiently, and it is painful to find my labors made the occasion of calumny and reviling. I am thankful, however, that no calumny or reviling can destroy any good I have accomplished." While "heartily glad to be disconnected from the administration," still he was "a little sorry to miss the opportunity of doing the best work" he felt confident he "could accomplish with God's help."

Before leaving Washington he took his successor, Mr. Fessenden, to the Treasury Department, explained the order of business, introduced him to the heads of the Bureaus, and did what he could to show not merely his personal regard for the new Cabinet member, but interest in the future service to be rendered to finance the country, a service he himself had so successfully carried on for four years. July 13 marked the half-mile post of his fifty-seventh year. He had now come to the cross-roads, and uncertain of the next turn. For the first time in fifteen years he was set loose from official duty. He was out of the chafing harness, yet in no mood to frisk through the meadow clover. He was sad and subdued. His departure from public life made not



SALMON P. CHASE



a ripple in governmental circles. "Today, I leave Washington a private citizen. Saw Stanton before leaving—cordial as ever . . . no other heads of Departments have called on me since my resignation," he commented in a letter to his daughter Nettie.

Chase was a lonely, deserted man that July day. Not one of his colleagues of the Cabinet offered a word of regret at his retirement, and, what cut the deeper, he knew they felt only relief. Chase from young manhood had inspired the admiration and love of women; he now had a wealth of affection from his daughters who worshipped him as a god—Kate preëminently. With men, he was unapproachable, distant, even "pompous," as they thought, a man with whom one could not easily be familiar; scarcely would one ever slap him on the back in cordial camaraderie; and one would have sooner told a risqué story to an archbishop than to Salmon Chase. One glance of his dark, piercing eyes would have scorched the lips of the offender. The very purity of his private life struck reproach to the man of the world. His enemies might malign him as a public official, they could not smirch his personal purity, try as they might. Once, on his arrival at a New York hotel, he found a strange lady there. Her exit was peremptory. This but once-recorded experience was not easily repeated. The daughters acted as their father's bodyguard, ever present with him.

On his arrival in New York, this July day, 1864, he was met by Kate and Nettie, and left with them the same evening for Newport. A week of social gaiety followed. Kate with her bewildering beauty, her dazzling jewels, and wit, never failed to create a sensation, when she entered a drawing-room on the arm of her distin-

guished father; and a taste of the flattering society of the Four Hundred was not displeasing to Mr. Chase, for he had remained throughout his life very much of a ladies' man; though in his heart of hearts he cared less for the glittering queens than for the simpler charms of his "dear friend," Mrs. Eastman, who was awaiting eagerly his promised visit to her at her home at Beverly.

There, on the following Sabbath, he attended church with her and then went with her to the Castle, as she called her summer home. The two in late afternoon had a walk on the small piece of land she called her farm, chatting of intimate affairs as they went, when she expressed great distress over the unkind things that had been said about him. In the evening, alone together in the parlor, her gentle, sympathetic mood touched him and he was close to love-making. But there was Kate standing in the shadow with warning finger, producing a subtle narcotic on his will and he retired in silence.

Applause greeted the fallen Secretary of the Treasury wherever he went in New England that summer. Boston gave a dinner in his honor, at which he met the poets, Emerson and Longfellow; his senator friends, Hale, Hoar, Sumner; and other notables. He was finding social balm to his injured pride, a tonic to his depressed spirits; still, in spite of it, his mind dwelt with somber insecurity upon the future; he was without a job, a man without a position, and he needed the salary; he was unhappy to have been retired under a stigma; he had cut himself off from public life and now he regretted it. What was to be his next move on the chessboard? He was uncertain and non-committal.

His political friends, either from selfish or disinterested motives, were watching him with anxious attention.

One wrote advising him to support Lincoln, in the hope of securing the French ambassadorship, to which Chase replied that he could do nothing then. A few days later, an Ohio man broached the subject of a Senate nomination, reporting that while there was opposition to him in one district, it could be overcome by active exertion; and Chase wired back: "Unanimous movement would command acceptance but cannot compete and must not be regarded as competitor"; while another correspondent threw out the tenuous thread of hope that Lincoln would reinstate his ex-Secretary as head of the Treasury Department. A few of his followers still clung to the illusion of his yet being nominated for the presidency. His future was in the hands of the gods.

Letters from his daughter, Kate Sprague, told him how eagerly his return to Rhode Island was awaited and after a short stop-over in New Hampshire to visit his boyhood home and the grave of his mother, he arrived in Providence, where he was met by his son-in-law and escorted to the "Pier Farm." He found a houseful of guests—Kate always had a houseful of guests—they distracted her from her unhappiness. Marital disharmony was showing its fangs, the first open indication of domestic discordance, a "misunderstanding" her father termed it, which he as practiced peacemaker attempted to dispel. He talked to Kate, and walked along the beach with the Governor to Point Judith "enjoying the grand rollers."

A gay week followed, during which Chase visited the Centennial in Providence, where he was "put in proces-

sion" and called upon to speak; all of which was flattering to his self-love. He was being "rather lionized." Union organizations in New York proposed calling a nominating convention to choose "a man who would put an end to the war"<sup>1</sup> but he himself declared he had no thought of joining the movement. Throughout the summer the fortunes of the Union were never darker, and discontent with the administration grew proportionately. With the fall of Atlanta, however, the tide of public sentiment was turned once more to Abraham Lincoln. The call for another candidate was countermanded, the radical movement abandoned, and the campaign of the Union Republicans opened with vigor.

What was to be the part taken by Chase? Where would he place his allegiance? With the Lincoln or the McClellan party; the Republicans, or the Democrats? During the month of August he had been in the White Mountains with his friend, Pierce, who begged the ex-Secretary to bury his private grievance against the President and work for him. Chase in a petulant mood harped continually on his ill-treatment; and referred to the Democratic nominee's qualifications. Chase spit out his venom with, "Well, anyway, McClellan is a gentleman." Personal pique seems to have been the chief ingredient in Chase's antipathy towards Lincoln, yet he declared the reverse was true: "My friends," he wrote one of his admirers at this time, "can do me no greater favor than to look on me in the light of a private citizen, that they do nothing and say nothing to create the impression that there is any personal quarrel between me and Mr. Lincoln. All differences that exist are on public questions and of no private nature." Still, the

<sup>1</sup> "Unwritten History," *New York Sun*, June 30, 1889.



struggle was going on within him to conquer his bitterness.

In the middle of September, accompanied by Senator and Mrs. Sprague, he started back to Washington, stopping in New York, where a friend congratulated him on his freedom from official responsibility, the very pressure of which he was missing. On their arrival at the Capital they found their house torn up under repair, and the Spragues immediately returned to New York, leaving him. During the next few days he called on Secretary Fessenden, who advised him to take part in the campaign for Mr. Lincoln, and promised to call on the President in behalf of Chase, also suggesting that he himself call at the White House. He acted upon this advice, and reported the result of the interviews to his daughter in a letter written, contrary to his custom, on the Sabbath day—extreme anxiety to hear of Kate's movements and doings prompting him. What schemes was the dominant daughter hatching? He feared that she might act to his detriment, for he well knew that, not without a severe wrench, would she give up the project of the independent candidacy. He wrote:

I cannot help feeling a great deal of anxiety. I am confident, however, that I shall not have to wait for some intelligence from you much longer. I have seen the President twice since I last wrote you. Both times three other persons were present and there was nothing like private conversation. His manner was evidently intended to be cordial and so were his words; and I hear of nothing but good-will from him. But you know he is not at all demonstrative either in speech or manner—not at all in these respects what I like—I feel that I do not know him and I find no satisfaction in what he says or does.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, Sept. 17, 1864.

The reaction between the two men was similar, one of repression. Lincoln said, "When Chase comes to see me, I feel awkward and he seems constrained."

In spite of injured feelings, in the solitude of his chamber, and apart from his daughter's selfish influence, Chase made up his mind to enter the campaign in behalf of the President, and urged his friends to join the Lincoln camp. Writing a political leader in New York, he said, "I hope you carried into effect your design to disconnect yourself wholly from any project of convention unfriendly to the Union nominees at Baltimore and that you will come out zealously in their support. This seems to me the only path of patriotic duty." He himself was ready to set the example and, a few days later, he started on a strenuous electioneering tour throughout the Middle West. He advised Kate of his plans and invited her and Nettie to accompany him as far as Cincinnati which they did. Evidence that Mrs. Sprague managed the social side of the campaign for her father is found in a bill for a banquet at the Burnett House of \$411.20—sufficient witness of the presence of the extravagant daughter.

Meantime, while Chase was doing valiant service for the Union nominees, Lincoln and Johnson, a movement for his promotion was being carried forward by a few of his friends—this without Kate's approval. On the death of Chief Justice Taney, the filling of his seat was at the disposal of the President. Charles Sumner, who months before had elicited a promise from Lincoln to give the Chief Justiceship to Chase, when the time came to make the appointment, now pressed the appeal; but Chase detractors were as active in begging the President to deny the favor, and dinning a persistent drone

of Chase's foibles and his attitude towards the President during the War. Lincoln listened with one ear and made his own judgment. "I have been all day and yesterday and day before besought by messages from friends all over the country determined to put bars between Chase and myself. But I shall nominate him for Chief-Justiceship, nevertheless."<sup>3</sup> The nomination was made.

Chase was highly gratified to accept the honor, which already he had contemplated as a possibility. He had previously, in confidence, expressed his wish to become Chief Justice. Writing a political admirer, he had repeated his lack of desire for the Presidency, and added that there was only one position which he really would like to have, if it were possible to have without sacrifice of principle or public interest, and that was the chief-justiceship. Salmon P. Chase was quite satisfied to relinquish the possibility of becoming Chief Executive of the nation for the less spectacular position.<sup>4</sup> Not so, his dominant daughter. Her consuming ambition again was frustrated. She could see back of the President's appointment only a selfish design of getting her father out of the way.

But in spite of her disappointment, she made haste to return to Washington, that she might be the first one to address him by his august title. After the appointment was confirmed, Charles Sumner hastened to congratulate his old friend. As he was passing through the hall, Kate swept down upon him with a menacing finger. "You, too, Mr. Sumner! You, too, in this business of shelving Papa! But never mind! I will defeat

<sup>3</sup> Dec. 6, 1864. *Letters and State Papers of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 616.

<sup>4</sup> That a Chief Justice shall seek no other position has from the beginning of our history been an unwritten law.

you all." On the 4th of March, 1865, Kate Chase was both a proud and a disappointed onlooker at the installation ceremonies that made Abraham Lincoln a second time President of the United States. Salmon Portland Chase for the first time wore the robes of Chief Justice, his towering figure and noble head lending dignity to the solemn occasion, when from the East door of the Capitol the two men appeared upon the platform. The oath was taken, and the sun at that moment broke through the clouds, and there was a booming of guns.

In the expressive countenance of Kate Chase Sprague could be read many conflicting thoughts, the chief one of which was jealous frustration. "Why is my father, the worthiest of statesmen, deprived of the highest position of the nation? He administers the oath of office to the incoming President when himself he should be installed in the high seat." She long had pictured herself as mistress of the White House, as standing regally gowned in the East Room receiving the worshipping throngs. She had used all means at her command to bring to fruition her ambitious hopes, yet still, the vision receded before her eyes; the more effort she had put forth to reach the goal, the farther away it seemed to move. But wait. Only time was needed. She yet would win him, so she mentally declared, his rightful place in the sun.

### XIII

#### POST WAR DAYS

**D**URING the social season of '64 and '65, Kate Chase Sprague was forced into retirement by approaching motherhood. Her husband and father helped to supply the lack of the elixir, adulation, that unfailingly acted as a tonic to her spirits, whose meat and drink was society. Both were most tender and sympathetic, and as her health became yet more delicate, fondly solicitous. A brief word in the daily Chase Diary records that Katie was "almost herself again after her illness which frightened me not a little"; also that her husband was all devotion. "To be so petted is almost worth being sick," added the father—always generous in his praise of his son-in-law. And he was equally kindly disposed towards Chase, although Sprague might with reason have been jealous, since Kate showed so plainly her preference for her Papa.

During the exquisite weather of early spring, father and daughter took frequent drives among the hills that skirt Washington on the north, often through Rock Creek region, enjoying together the loveliness of blooming dogwood and redbud. All unconscious of the presence of desperadoes in their close vicinity, they feasted upon the beauties of Nature. One afternoon,<sup>1</sup> in a wooded stretch of road where the District of Columbia line crosses Seventh Street near the Soldiers' Home,

<sup>1</sup> Monday, March 20.

crouched Wilkes Booth and members of his gang waiting for the President's carriage; and when that of the Secretary crunched on the gravel, the marplots thought it to be the one they were waiting for, but recognizing Mr. Chase inside, they fell back into the shadow.

Washington during the first days of April was keyed to the highest pitch of excitement and exultation, since the Union troops had entered Richmond April 3, and six days later, Lee had surrendered. There was an all-night celebration at the Capital, which continued the next day with an impromptu parade and a White House serenade; while Booth and all his conspirators were skulking about, working up their insane madness against the President, who in his short speech spoke only with tender sentiments of the defeated South. Mrs. Sprague and the Chief Justice drove through the city to see the superb illumination in honor of Grant's victories. On another occasion, but without his daughter, Chase was guest at a dinner where Admiral Farragut and Jerome Bonaparte were also guests. How Kate would have enjoyed such brilliant society which now she must forego! But her devoted father hurried home, as he was "anxious about Katie's health." Her cough worried him. He remembered that her mother had died of consumption in her early twenties.

April 14, the day of the great tragedy. The Chief Justice had the President much in mind. In the morning he sent a note to Lincoln, together with the Bible on which, six weeks before, he had been sworn into office. In the afternoon Chase, while out driving with Nettie, thought of calling at the White House to talk with Lincoln about universal suffrage—the colored race be-



KATE CHASE IN POST-WAR DAYS





ing still the paramount interest of the Friend of Freedom,—but he felt reluctant, as he said, to intrude upon the President, fearing he “might annoy him and do harm rather than good.” Chase always thought twice before approaching Lincoln, to all others the most accessible of men. Having postponed the call, the Chief Justice went home and retired early. Chase was always to regret not having seen Mr. Lincoln; he had the solace, however, that he would not have found the President at home, for in the middle afternoon he and Mrs. Lincoln had gone for a drive.

It was a beautiful day. The President, on his return to the White House, sat down to enjoy the new Artemus Ward book; but Mrs. Lincoln protested that he must not disappoint the people who were expecting to see him at the theater that evening. General Grant had called to say that he was leaving town to visit his daughter Nelly at her school, and would not be one of the party. Upon what slight threads life sometimes hangs: Grant by his absence perhaps was saved; Lincoln by keeping this social date was shot.

All night, Washington was in a frenzy of horror and fear. Secretary Stanton ordered the city put under military law, and regiments were roused and sent here and there, galloping wildly to guard the exits of the Capital to waylay the assassin, and to scour the streets for conspirators. When it became known that Secretary Seward, lying ill at home with a broken jaw from an accident, had been assaulted by a ruffian, the steel binding about his face serving to protect his life, a general call to arms was made to guard other high officials. A special squad was stationed at the Kirkwood House where the Vice-President was staying and soldiers of

the provost guard were ordered to patrol the Chase home throughout the night. Messengers hurried through the residence streets giving the terrible news of the assassination, and warning the citizens of further possible crime.

According to custom, Chase was reading the Scriptures before going to sleep, when his colored valet came up and told his master that a gentleman was below who said the President had been shot. He was shown up, and proved to be an employee in the Treasury Department. He said he had just come from the theater, but could give no particulars of the awful affair. Chase hoped the man might be mistaken about it; but a few minutes later, another friend came in and confirmed what had been told, adding that Secretary Seward also had been assassinated, and that guards were being placed around the homes of all prominent officials, under the apprehension that the plot had a wide range. The night was passed by the Chief Justice in a state of horror. He lay awake asking himself what he had best do. Should he go to the bedside of the stricken President? His first impulse was to go to him,—“whom I could not, however, believe to have been fatally wounded.” But “on reflecting that I could not possibly be of any service and should probably be in the way of those who could, I resolved to wait for morning and further intelligence.”

All through the long hours, the heavy tramp of the sentries with their continued ominous footfalls sounded outside the Chase home, hardly more than a stone's throw from the small frame cottage where the President lay dying. In the morning the sky was black and a heavy rain was falling. The Chief Justice was up with

the light, preparing to go down to the White House to verify the dreadful news, or happily to learn that Lincoln yet lived. The scene was one of appalling dismay that paralyzed men's souls. Mr. Chase returned home. He had his official duty to perform: the Chief Justice in a small hotel room that morning administered the oath of office to Andrew Johnson, an act which, to the far-reaching mind of Chase, gave no assurance of the future well-being of the distracted, disrupted nation. Johnson had been chosen for political reasons, as vice-president; and was ill-fitted from every point of view to command the respect of the people. The Chief Justice anticipated further strife between the rabidly victorious North and the bitterly defeated South. Luckily, he himself held the most vitally important position as Justice of the Supreme Court in adjudicating the differences and mollifying the antagonisms. Chase was recognized as the most able mind, the most tolerant and all-sided in his outlook, of perhaps all the statesmen of his generation. He was a loyal Northerner, with a sympathy and understanding of the Southerner's psychology.

The Chief Justice had already made plans for a trip South to study conditions. Two weeks later, he started on what was to prove a novel and interesting experience. His younger daughter, Nettie, now an attractive young *débutante* accompanied him. They started the evening of May first, on a sea voyage, in the *Wayanda*, a trig, ocean-going boat with six guns, manned by a competent crew. The party included Whitelaw Reid, who went along as editor-reporter for his Cincinnati paper, the *Gazette*. His stories were afterwards pub-

lished in book form under the title *A Southern Tour*. The party was most congenial.

On first thought, one would say that Chief Justice Chase was inviting insult and injury to himself and his party, in going into the land of Dixie so soon after its conquest. As it proved, the derogation came from the North, while he apparently was welcomed in the South as an honored guest. The colored people, at any rate, were overjoyed to show their affection for this fighting Friend of Freedom who had fought for their rights since his young manhood. At Fortress Monroe the party visited a negro school, and at Charleston they attended a meeting of colored people, making up a motley audience. Men in rags, others in faded army uniform, packed the building on one side, while their women on the other side were gaudily costumed in various styles of headgear, from red bandanas to new style hats perched on woolly heads. As the handsome Mr. Chase with his pretty daughter came down the centre aisle there was a burst of applause. "The negroes may be very ignorant," said Mr. Reid, "but they know, or think they know, who their friends are." The Chief Justice, in his short speech to them, urged his hearers, so recently made free, to exercise "industry, economy, good order," and show their fitness for suffrage.

A great race numbering 4,000,000 souls, has been suddenly enfranchised. All men are looking to see whether the prophecies of the enemies of that race will be fulfilled or falsified. The answer to that question, men and women of color, is with you . . . your salvation must come of yourselves . . . by honesty, temperance, and industry, by faithfulness in all employments and to all trusts. . . . Now about the elective franchise. That you will have suffrage in the end is just as sure as it is that you respect yourselves and respect others and do your best to prove your worthiness of it.

Such was the gist of the brief bit of fatherly advice this friend gave the black audience in Charleston, the only speech he made on the trip. Singularly simple and disinterested as these few words were, they were construed by certain Northern newspapers as "stump speeches, and shameless intriguing with old political leaders in his electioneering tour through the South."

Everywhere, the Chief Justice was welcomed by the blacks, showing they held him in the same esteem as they had held "Linkum." "Mistah Chase a-settin' on de tree ob life; Roll, Jordan, Roll!" chanted the powerful chorus in the favorite spiritual, led by a bent, white-haired, old ex-slave. At Savannah the party called upon an aged Negro, a former slave who had with great industry and saving paid for his own freedom, who asked Chase for his picture. When the ex-Secretary of the Treasury handed the old man a dollar greenback with the Chase head engraved on it, Old Sandie was puzzled; he looked back and forth from the bill to the Chief Justice, then said satisfiedly, "Now I knows yuh. You'se Old Greenback hisself."

At New Orleans, Nettie and her father were entertained by her aunt, Mrs. Randall Hunt, the sister of Sarah Ludlow Chase, a Northern woman by birth, who had married a Southern man, and during the Civil War had suffered from the dividing of her allegiance, with her husband and his people pledged to the Southern cause, and her own brother fighting on the opposite side. At the commencement of the conflict she had pleaded through most grippingly pathetic letters that her brother-in-law Chase should stop the wicked war. Now after five years of suffering, she experienced more joy than in many a day when she saw "Little Nettie,"

her dead sister's child. The journey home to Ohio was by the Mississippi River north to Cincinnati.

Mr. Chase, anxiously anticipating news from the Spragues at their summer home "Melluna," missed a wire announcing the advent of his first grandchild. A letter from the proud father quickly followed and three days later, one written by the mother herself, in which she proposed naming her son after Salmon Portland Chase, a proposition he promptly discouraged.

I long to see the dear boy, whom you must name William. It is natural that you should want to name him after me in some way; but my only tolerable name is my surname; and William is not only a better one; but it is the name of one to whom *your duties* belong, and it was the name of his father, was it not? It should be borne by his first boy. So please consider that case adjudged.

Thus spake the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court—there was no appeal and wifely duty won the day. The babe was christened William Sprague, making the fourth generation of the family to bear the patronymic.

The decision of the Chief Justice against the perpetuation of his name recalls his early antipathy to it, when as a young man of twenty-two he thought seriously of changing his "fishy" name.

The birth of William Sprague junior, heir of the Sprague millions, created a mild sensation throughout the country. The public seemed to evince as lively an interest in the arrival of this child of fortune, as had been aroused by the marriage of the parents. In truth, William Sprague junior was introduced to life much as a Queen's babe might be, and his early years were similar to a royal infant's; constant attention by his nurse, with occasional showing-off in the drawing room before

sentimental ladies who gushed over his beauty, after which he was hurried back to the nursery.

The elegant drawing room was not the prince's realm, but rather the setting for the Queen, who once more received her courtiers and accepted their homage. A one-time friend of Mrs. Sprague paints a picture of her as she was then remembered:

Kate Chase was a beautiful woman, of charming personality, gracious, courteous, fascinating. She presided with elegance in her home, with her father, before her marriage, and later, with a touch of matronly dignity, but with no loss of the gay, happy manner of her girlhood. My admiration was so great that I was not satisfied with her marriage. I doubt if anyone would have seemed worthy of her. But when she sent for her lovely baby, at one of her delightful afternoon receptions and looked the picture of happiness with him in her arms, I felt somewhat reconciled. Her entertainments were elegant, lavish; her guests were perfectly at ease—she gave the impression that she was enjoying her party—and wished to prolong it. I recall a ball of roseate hue. The walls were lined with pink. The ballroom was a fairyland. Altogether, that was the most beautiful ball I ever attended.

At this "ball of roseate hue," given during the winter of '66, Kate Chase Sprague appeared in an entrancing gown, a pale pink overdress draped with pink convolvulus and worn over a blue tarlatan skirt. She was excessively fond of pink and affected for many years a youthful style of dress not unbecoming to her.

During this first season after the war, many of the ante-bellum houses that a few years before had sparkled and flourished were not opened. Without rival, Kate Chase Sprague "unsurpassed in beauty, elegance, or charm by the haughtiest of the Southern belles, was now holding the scepter."<sup>2</sup> The ban against imported

<sup>2</sup> Claude G. Bowers.

luxuries had been lifted and not for years had such elegant costumes been worn. In spite of unpleasant weather on New Year's Day, the ladies of the official circle went forth to the White House reception gowned in the latest mode—silver gray or lavender satins, with dress bonnets in the *Josephine* or *Empire* style. One saw the costliest fabrics fit for a queen's wardrobe glimmering beneath velvet cloaks costing the astounding sum of three hundred dollars!—but then, a French, lace-flounced petticoat of Kate's cost no less.

And what of the husband who paid for this frivolous *frou frou*? Did he join in the chorus of "Oh's" and "Ah's" evoked by the startling extravagance of his haughty wife? Very little was seen of the Senator that winter. He was frequently indisposed and did not appear in the Sprague drawing room, where pomp and splendor prevailed. On January 13th, Judge Chase's fifty-eighth birthday, Kate gave her father a sumptuous reception, a *matinée* as it was called, from one to three o'clock. Statesmen, officers of the army and navy, diplomats from foreign states all presented their congratulations to the eminent jurist, who never before appeared "so perfect in manly beauty," to quote the gushing letter-writer, Olivia. The house was crowded—members of the Cabinet, Senators, not one was missing—save perhaps, Senator Sprague. The setting was delicately sensuous. Candles and wax tapers gave a softness and brilliance to the long drawing room, exquisite flowers threw out the fragrance of a conservatory, while music from a farther room completed the allurements of the senses. The hostess stood beside her father, commanding the obedience of her guests, who instinctively fell back, the better to admire the poise of her head as it



turned slowly upon her long white neck "in a way no real queen's head ever turned."

Balls and more balls, each seeming to outrival the preceding in magnificence, climaxed by the French minister's fête, "the grandest display ever seen in Washington . . . French all over . . . dancing and waltzing perfectly charming . . . music superlative . . . elegant luncheon . . . choice fruits . . . dainties and drinks." The ebullient letter-writer, while conceding paramount praise to the Marquis de Montholon's ball, made the loyal reservation that, after all, it was no grander than the same kind of parties given by "our accomplished country-woman, Mrs. Senator Sprague."

Lent had begun on February 14; nevertheless, slight regard was paid to prayer and penance. Late in the season, a series of *soirées* was given at the French Embassy, where brilliant and varied conversation sparkled with wit and wisdom. And none so brilliant as Kate Chase Sprague. She appeared almost too gay to be happy. And, indeed, there were whispers of conjugal infelicity in the home on the corner of 6th and E Streets Northwest; in fact, one newsmonger was bold enough to publish the possibility of a definite rift in the marriage of the wealthy Senator and his handsome wife. The gossip went unverified and both kept their silence. Kate was making her plans for a summer's sojourn in Europe. Never forgetting to pay homage to her adored father, just before her departure from Washington, Mrs. Sprague gave a dinner to the members of the Supreme Court.

## XIV

### FROM ABROAD

EASTER, 1866, fell on April 1st. The following week, Mrs. Sprague with Baby Willie and his nurse, Maggie, left Washington for New York preparatory to sailing, a few days later, with friends for Europe. Miss Chase was to accompany her sister. Their father made a hurried trip to see them off and to wish them Godspeed. Wearied with work and worry, the Chief Justice was a pathetic figure as he stood on the dock, watching the *Australasia* sail away with all he held dearest and "most precious in the world." Still, he was philosophic in his loneliness, saying to himself, "It is best." Discord had entered the Sprague home—a temporary separation might be salutary.

His friends, recognizing his somber mood, strove to dissipate his sadness. His son-in-law took him to Barnum's Museum, which he enjoyed so much that the next day he repeated the program with a friend. Later he went with Jay Cooke to Philadelphia, thence to Washington and his household, which included Mrs. Smith, Kate's grandmother, and Mrs. Cranford, the housekeeper, a quiet, homey circle. The special session of Congress held Senator Sprague also in Washington, so, for the first time, the two men were thrown back upon one another for companionship. Though they had no common intellectual interest, Kate's husband, be-

cause of his marital unhappiness, made an appeal to the older man.

Writing to her in midsummer when the heat was becoming intense, he said, "I have been strongly tempted to seek a cooler latitude but I hate to leave the Governor alone in the house. We get along nicely. I only regret that I cannot be of more use to him. He tells you, I dare say, all about the establishment . . . How 'oats, beans and barley grow'<sup>1</sup> . . . how we ride evenings." There was little free and genial communion between the two men. Kate's father was yearning to act as mediator, as peacemaker, as father confessor, yet her husband was gloomily silent. How different his mood from that of three years before, the summer after the engagement, when the lover, buoyed up by hope and love, was so sure of their future happiness; then so willing to defer to the older man's "greater experience in such matters" and accept his advice upon domestic arrangements! "Mutual interests, mutual forbearance, mutual love" would make for happiness, so the young man thought. But when these are wrecked, what then?

The two men's pleasantest hours were spent in reading the letters from the sisters that came with every ship from abroad, in comparing them and voting upon their respective excellence. Both young women wrote charmingly, but Nettie more often took first prize, because of the "ease and grace and gossipiness" of her style. Then, too, the pen-sketches she used as marginal illustrations added to the vividness of the descriptions of their foreign experiences. In England the cordial reception given them by the American Minister Charles

<sup>1</sup> The kitchen garden.

Francis Adams and his wife, the visit to the House of Lords, their introduction to John Bright, and the "stupid presentation" to the Queen all made good copy. Kate had spent a deal of money on her gown. The lace alone sold at auction for \$37.50 a yard, twenty-five years later.

In return, father and husband were watchful that no mail steamer left New York for Europe without carrying messages from them. Mr. Chase often spent his early morning hours writing to his "Darling Kate" and his "Precious Nettie"—letters overflowing with affection and without the Chief Justice's usual stateliness of diction. One of his letters closes with, "We, the Governor and I and Grandma and Mrs. Cranford and Albert and the nine dogs, are all well." Sometimes, though, he reverted to his pedagogic style, and became severely critical of Nettie's penmanship and spelling, refusing to accept the artistic temperament as an excuse for defective form: "Spur up your Pegasus and make him keep step. . . . Let Pegasus use his wings but do you use the reins." The amiable Nettie accepted criticism kindly and without retort. Not so Kate, who could find flaws in her beloved father's models and was not backward about expressing her opinion, which drew from the great man a half apology, in his next letter to Nettie:

Kate seems to think that I criticize too much. But I can't quite agree. Certainly, no two girls ever had more appreciative readers than you, and if our admiration of your letters is somewhat stilted in expression, it is not important that you should be entirely satisfied as long as any degree of perfection remains unattained.

The next letter, full of praise, compensates for former preachment. "Kate's letter is delightful. What pleased

me most is her praise of you. If you deserve all she says, and I believe you do, I shall have the most delightful of delights in welcoming you home."

The father was to be disappointed in his anticipation of an early welcome to "little Nettie." The sisters had found Europe fascinating: in Paris, in the midst of other distractions, they had had their photographs taken, with their hair done in the very latest French fashion—Kate's in curls—which the Chief Justice liked not,—he had "loved her so long in the old way." He declared, however, that the photographs were, of course, very handsome and added, whimsically, "I took them in to your grandmother a moment since, and it may take off the cream of my commendation if I tell you that she said: 'Is that Kate? It don't look like her. How she has changed!' I left the new style with the old lady that she may get acquainted with you in it."

The Europeans liked the looks of this beautiful Americaine. Even the peasants, it is said, ran out of their houses to get a sight of her. Yes, Kate was changed. She had become a Parisienne in her style, and had found her way to the great costumer, M. Worth, to order her gowns for the next season. He pronounced hers the finest figure of any American lady. In Florence, she fulfilled her father's desire and had her bust done in marble by Hiram Powers,<sup>2</sup> who was working that same summer on one of the Chief Justice. Kate gave Mr. Powers suggestions, as the work progressed. She was casually studying art and architecture as she went through Europe, visiting the palaces, the castles and châteaux. Designs for a grand home of her own were

<sup>2</sup> Hiram Powers and S. P. Chase were young men friends years before in Cincinnati.

working in her imagination and on the coming of her husband, in October, to accompany her home, she disclosed her plans and gained his consent to transform the old Sprague farmhouse at Narragansett Pier into what eventually became the great show place of the New England coast.

When the time came to return home, Kate had already determined upon spending the following summer once more abroad to complete her building arrangements. Nettie on her part had found Germany so stimulating to her ambition for culture, that she longed greatly to remain and study art and the languages. First, though, her father's consent must be gained: there was always the question of finances; Nettie was aware that her father's income never had met his expenses and that at this time, probably, he would be unable to provide necessary funds for foreign study. These doubts were set at rest by Senator Sprague's offer to advance the required money, as he had done for this summer's trip. Kate wrote her father to win his approval of their plans: Nettie to stay in Dresden for the winter, the Spragues to return to Washington for the opening of Congress and go abroad again the following spring, meet Nettie in Paris, and spend the summer in travel, when they hoped their father might accompany them. Would he endorse this schedule?

The appeal reached him at an inopportune time. The Chief Justice had returned from a six weeks' visit in New England. He had spent a few days with Mrs. Eastman at Beverly, where he was on the thirteenth of August, Kate's birthday, which, alas, he had let pass without commemoration—his first offense—a lapse which his daughter was not slow to censure. Now he

was back in hot, dusty Washington; he was lonely and ill and to add to his discomfort, he had lost his certificates of stock, which was very annoying. He glanced over a sheaf of mail that was waiting for him, letters a many, and bills, as always; then he picked up his pen to answer Katie's letter: <sup>3</sup>

After all, question of remaining abroad must be solved by Nettie herself. The thought certainly is not very agreeable to me. It is bad enough to have you away seven months and it is hard to reconcile myself to the idea of either of you being away for another year. If Nettie remains the winter she will of course wish (and in that I should wish too) that she might join you and the Governor, next summer.

At this point his pen grows irascible.

But there is no probability that I should be with you. What a year may bring forth, no one can tell. If I live and remain in my present position, it is pretty certain that I shall have little time for travelling anywhere, except to the places in which I must hold court.

The future looked clouded and uncertain; he might not be living by another summer; he might retire; at all events, he did not crave travel and excitement, he wanted home and peace and love. His mind turned to his dear, affectionate Mrs. Eastman, who cherished still a tender regard for him and whom he might yet win as his wife, a "lovely woman, unaffected, and good-looking enough, and intelligent enough though not too learned to be an agreeable talker." Was it still too late? His friend Clay <sup>4</sup> had recently been "happily married," as Kate had reported, and here was a letter from Charles Sumner with the "astonishing" announcement of his

<sup>3</sup> S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, Washington, Sept. 10, 1866.

<sup>4</sup> Cassius M. Clay, Minister to Russia.

forthcoming marriage—both men of his age and station in life. He felt deserted and lonely.

He rose to inquire if the last mail of the day had come. Yes, but no letter from Beverly, and he was "disappointed," so he confides to his Journal. He opened a business letter from his occasional secretary.<sup>5</sup> It contained disconcerting news. In several well-known papers, Dame Grundy had published that the Chief Justice was about to wed a lovely widow, a Mrs. M. or a Mrs. E. In a turmoil of outraged feeling he again picked up his pen: "The papers show their impudence in connecting my name with Mrs. Eastman. . . . You may . . . contradict verbally every report you hear . . . until you hear from me that I have actually determined to enter or have entered the bonds of matrimony. I don't absolutely renounce the idea . . . but I am still likely to remain a widower. Why should I think of anything else, being a grandfather? Ought there not be a law against grandfathers being married to any but grandmothers?"

The impudent editors had pried further into the personal life of the Chief Justice, and were discussing his probable wealth and the means he employed in making it. He resented "jurisdiction over his private affairs."

Why does it concern anybody whether I am worth some hundred dollars or even millions, if I have wronged no one and injured no trust? I have made some money before, while, and since I was Secretary; but not a cent by transaction in public securities or by the use of public funds, or of any knowledge received in a public capacity. . . . I think myself worth today somewhere from \$100,000 to \$125,000 in currency . . . my private income is now between \$6,000 and

<sup>5</sup> J. W. Schuckers.



\$7,000 and nearly the whole of my property is productive now. I don't write these things to be made public, but merely that you may speak when you have occasion, advisedly.

A political cabal headed by Thurlow Weed, the Chief Justice's inveterate enemy, was working insidiously and persistently to destroy the possibility of Mr. Chase's nomination in 1868 to the presidency; the attacks were definitely begun in the Weed organ in the summer of '66, while Mr. Chase was on his vacation at his birth-place. "Chief Justice Chase is in Vermont. He is charged to be intriguing for the campaign of 1868."<sup>6</sup> Also charges of dishonest use of his office in the accumulation of a fortune were trumped up against him: "Chief Justice Chase is worth about \$700,000, or 70 times as much as he possessed in 1860." Through his friends, he answered this accusation that placed him in the class of speculators: "Chief Justice Chase disposed of the statement that he made an income of \$700,000 last year, by saying that he would be willing to take \$100,000 in five-twenties, and make a clear conveyance of all he has in the world, to anybody who will pay his debts."<sup>7</sup> This indirect admission of his financial status seems to have silenced his detractors.

Coincident with these defamations of his moral integrity, an assault was made upon the very foundation of his house, by innuendo and slander against Senator Sprague and his wife. The rumor of domestic disharmony that had circulated for months now had grown into the scandal of a coming divorce—a word of offense to utter and scarcely to be used in connection with a virtuous woman. Mr. Chase had the same abhorrence

<sup>6</sup> *The New York World*, Aug. 1, 1866.

<sup>7</sup> *Albany Evening Journal*, Aug. 22, 1867.

of the breaking of the marriage tie as all Puritans of his time and generation. He maintained the belief that "everything almost should be borne before seeking separation through a suit of divorce;" and he wrote of his perplexity in knowing what to do. "I hate to touch such filth in any way but, I suppose, that so extreme an outrage on all possibilities as well as upon all propriety must be returned in some way. . . . Of course I can do nothing until Gov. Sprague comes home."<sup>8</sup> Personally, the father felt helpless to act, though he did suggest that all copies of the papers in which the libel was found should be carefully filed; the evident "malignity" exhibited against his son-in-law should perhaps be "answered" by a reminder of Gov. Sprague's public service:—"the first of the Democratic Governors to send troops to Washington for the defense of the country, accompanying them himself, & honorably (leading) them at the battle of Bull Run & having three horses shot under him on that bloody field."

More than this in repudiation of the "scandalous libel" against the good name of his children, the Chief Justice felt impotent to offer. "Feeling as I do I am not fit . . . to suggest what should be said. Only let not Katie's name be in any way mentioned." To strike at the virtue of his Katie's character was to drive an arrow close to his heart.

Before Kate's husband had sailed for Europe in October, the rumor was published that she was to sue him for divorce,<sup>9</sup> though his departure ostensibly to accom-

<sup>8</sup> S. P. Chase to J. W. Schuckers, Oct. 16, 1866.

<sup>9</sup> "It is reported in Providence, R. I., that the wife of a (not very) distinguished Senator is about to apply for a divorce." (*N. Y. World*, Sept. 14.)

pany his wife home should have been sufficient evidence of their friendly relations. Not so. The gossip continued for another month at least, when an emphatic denial was published:

The National Intelligencer of November 1st, 1866, quoting the Providence Journal says, . . . the story going the rounds respecting the domestic relations of United States Senator Sprague of Rhode Island, is an unfounded and malicious calumny, without one iota of foundation . . . there is not in the country a man happier or who deserves to be happier in his domestic relations, and nothing has occurred to afford even a pretext for the slanders which have been invented by malice and circulated by scandal.

We read nothing more of the 'scandal' except in the Weed organ.<sup>10</sup> All reference to the affair was carefully kept out of the father's letters to his daughters, who were enjoying European travel; he himself strove to believe what he wished to believe, namely that this "outrage" was against all belief and beyond all possibility. The return of the couple did not reinforce his confidence that all was well in the Sprague home.

On the first of December, Senator and Mrs. Sprague were met at the steamer dock on their arrival from Europe by the Chief Justice. "It was a delight to see Katie and Willie and the Governor so well and in such good spirits," he wrote to Nettie, who was already settled for a year's European study. "Boy is excellent and seems to take to his Grandpa very decidedly." In less than a fortnight his family report had changed color. Everything was gray. "Little Willie's sick with croup—

<sup>10</sup> "We rejoice to learn from the *Providence Journal* that the wife of Senator Sprague has not sued for divorce, that no couple are happier in their domestic relations, and that the entire story is a libel manufactured out of whole cloth. Such being the case, the Senator ought to track the falsehood to its source, and secure the punishment of its author." (*Albany Evening Journal*, Oct. 23, 1866.)

a great grief to all of us. Dr. Ball gave him a little calomel—first better, then worse next day. Kate sent for Dr. Pope, a homeopathic physician. He thought, and of course Katie thought, it was the calomel; but I like a poor fish, reserve my opinion. The babe, at any rate, had a hard time, but last night he began to improve, and is still improving. I hope we may now regard him as fairly convalescent.”

Holiday season at the corner of Sixth and E Streets Northwest never had been so cheerless. The Governor went to Providence to visit his mother. The Chief Justice was gloomy; he felt the atmosphere's heavy incubus and he was at a loss to know what to do to lift the pall. On New Year's Day society events of the season began. The first reception given by the Chief Justice and Mrs. Sprague was not well attended; it was a fizzle, in fact: four judges, no ladies, one congressman, a general or two, a lot of lawyers, a number of distinguished strangers, pretty much all of the South American diplomats—in all a hundred or more; a dull party which the brilliance of the hostess could not enliven. And “no ladies” to stand back and admire the new Worth costume! Was this a polite boycott of the maligned lady? No, the General and Mrs. Grant were giving a party that evening, and “all the world was there.” Julia Dent Grant had not learned that hostesses automatically made way for Kate Chase Sprague.

With the recovery of the baby, Kate launched into the season's festivities as if in a frenzy of effort to suppress her unhappiness; she was drawn into the younger set when the Misses Hoyt came from New York as guests at the Sprague mansion. Night after night she danced, sometimes until nearly morning. The father

made no protest; the husband did. "Katie is very well, though the Governor insists that late hours are impairing somewhat her well being," reports Chase to Nettie. He praises Katie's good looks: "She is stouter than ever and yet not too stout. She is handsomer than ever." Of the husband's well being the report was unfavorable:

He is pretty well this winter but suffers still a great deal from dyspepsia. Last night he felt so badly that he could not come down. He takes more to the boy than to anything or anybody else. No woman could have a kinder or a more indulgent husband than he has been to Katie. Sometimes I fear she doesn't feel it quite enough; though I know she loves him truly and is proud of him.

Testimony to be repudiated in the coming years by Kate Chase herself. Already love was dead in her heart; from this time on she was to keep up the pretext of harmony only for her father's sake.

The Sprague house was none too joyous a home. The tiny Willie was the only strong bond to hold the family together. The Senator found in his son a prideful solace. The Chief Justice let slip his dignity and relaxed in company with his grandson. "That baby of babies, before whom all other babies hide their diminished heads . . . a dear little fellow, strange to say, especially when one remembers the gentle and even tempers of his pa and ma, he has shown a will of his own; and yet he is not obstinate. It is nice to see with what a grace he submits when he finds he can't help himself. . . . He has a proper regard for his own dignity. If he considers himself at all slighted he gets mad as quick as anybody you ever saw. But he is politic too; as soon as he is convinced that he makes nothing by crying he comes out of it at once and tries conciliation. See what

a diplomat he is going to make!" Thus does the fond grandfather ramble on in his delightful analysis of the baby Willie, "a dear little fellow" with an amiable disposition considering his parents' fiery tempers—a sly and humorous stab.

The summer emigration from Washington had begun. Mrs. Sprague and Master Willie, *Thérèse*, the lady's maid, and Maggie, the nurse, with Richard, a colored servant, composed the group that took the train for New York. Kate and her entourage again were on their way to Europe. Senator Sprague now more and more given to following in his wife's wake, joined her in a day or two, before she sailed, but he did not accompany her abroad as at first planned. Politics was his excuse; the coming State election in Rhode Island would soon determine whether the Senator was to be his own successor or no. "He does not talk much but he is confident of the result. Katie, of course, wants him to remain and so do I," writes Chase. How would Kate meet the crisis if William Sprague were to fail of reelection to the Senate? Would she go with her husband into private life in Providence, or would she remain with her father in Washington? Which would win, love or duty?

## XV

### THE GREAT TRIAL

NEW YEAR'S DAY! An ominous inauguration of Eighteen Sixty-Eight, in Washington. The revolution was on. The terrorists were demanding the downfall of President Johnson. Mutterings of vengeance heard for a year and more had grown threatening since the Stanton *impasse*, brought about by his refusal to resign from the Cabinet. Though the situation was tense to the point of hatred, the White House reception was even more pretentious than ever: enemies as well as friends mingled their "Happy New Year" wishes and took the hand of one marked for the guillotine, while the President himself moved about without trace of care upon his brow, kissing the small children; his daughters receiving with their characteristic simplicity and protective consideration of their persecuted father.

The Chief Justice and Mrs. Sprague were there, offering their genuine good wishes to the occupants of the Mansion. Later in the day they drove through the slushy streets to the one-time home of Stephen A. Douglas, where the General and Mrs. Grant were holding their reception; Kate in her elegant clothes, carrying herself with prideful self-assurance on the arm of her father, through the crush from the street to the cloak room, others making way for the queen of the Capital, who took rank above everyone else—for had not the host himself, General Grant, conceded her law on precedence

when he returned from the war, the hero of the day, and "called on her father first"? Charles Sumner and his bride, the attractive young widow, Alice Hooper, of Boston, were there also, neither appearing as happy as they should have been; already, the egoist husband felt his "responsibility" irking him, and the wife was accepting consolation for her mistake in the attentions of a gallant young Prussian attaché. It was all very sad and bad and mad of him, this late marriage. His old friend, Chase, must have taken mental note and decided that such unions were precarious; while Kate looked on and meditated on the thralldom of a marriage of convenience. However, she had her father as escort and companion and confidant; she had, too, her salon with its absorptions social and political: her increasing power as a leader of men gave her an intoxicating stimulation in exercising her sway—that of Madame Roland and Madame de Staël combined—she had the interest of the State at heart, but far more her father's fame. To have power over men's minds was in itself an exhilaration, but what was more to the point, she could utilize it to her own ends. The next three months she would concentrate upon the coming presidential campaign and close up her ranks preparatory for the battle. She would devote herself wholly to society, though all the time having only politics in mind.

A month later came the White House reception, the largest ever witnessed at the President's home; the radical group stayed away; the rest of the Washington world was there; the restlessness of revolution drove them to whatever offered as distraction. There were lectures for the serious minded, by Anna Dickinson and Dr. Chapin; the theater, with the popular Maggie



Mitchell and Joseph Jefferson; for the low-brows, there was Dan Rice's Circus or Mrs. Daniels' Seances.

Mrs. Sprague and her father avoided the vulgar-curiosity mobs and found their recreation in exclusive circles at home or abroad—neither was a good mixer in the common acceptance of the phrase. Several affairs came off during the weeks of late winter and early spring, at their home—dinners, receptions and dances: on Saint Valentine's Day, a select party of twenty-five couples, each lady receiving a choice bouquet; in March, a larger affair, a German, which called for many expensive favors—taken as a matter of course, for Senator Sprague was the Croesus of Washington. The most sensational of all the gatherings that season in the Sprague mansion was on the evening when, at a reception given for the Chief Justice, the President and his daughters entered and were received with the utmost cordiality by the host and hostess, while the other guests looked their astonishment and whispered their disapproval. Could the Supreme Court be trusted to sustain a neutral attitude in the pending impeachment trial? From that evening, the Chief Justice was shadowed by detectives, who watched and listened in the doorway of the mansion on the corner of 6th and E.

Through January and into late February, though nothing decisive had happened, the two contending political forces were steeling themselves for the final onslaught, a battle royal between the President and the Secretary of War, the head of the State, and the head of the Army, and their respective soldiery. The House was scheduled to cast a vote on whether or not to impeach on a day late in February, a lowering day as befit the scene at the Capitol. Through the snow and the

slush the men and women thronged the streets, all hoping for a good seat at the "show." "Mrs. Senator Sprague," as she was known, in colorful costume, sat in the gallery of the House, with the evident desire to offset by her appearance the murky atmosphere and give a note of gayety to the surroundings. She listened to the vengeful appeal of the dying Thaddeus Stevens, who seemed to be holding on to life only until he had unseated the President: a cry from the grave to destroy the "great political malefactor" and fill the entire world with a "free and untrammelled people," not a "nest of shrinking, cowardly slaves." She heard the naming of a committee to prepare articles of impeachment and her logical mind flashed the personal significance of this act: the Chief Justice would preside over the trial of the President. How would this delicate and complex duty affect her father's presidential prospects? Kate Chase refused to recognize the coils into which Ambition would throw them, while the public looked on and deplored. A Washington letter-writer<sup>1</sup> expressed in the florid style of the day the general sentiment of the thoughtful:

Nothing is so malignant in its effects upon a good man as the burning desire to be President. God help the man when this iron has entered his soul, for this fiery ambition drinks up every other sweet virtue. It is not the man alone who is consumed by ambition, it is the woman also, who often takes the lion's share . . . the woman who apparently has everything that the world has to bestow, and yet, like the princess in the fairy tale, deems her palace incomplete unless a roc's egg is hung in the centre of the chamber. There is only one position at the republican court that this most elegant woman has not attained. She has never reigned at the White House. Every other triumph has palled upon her taste, and

<sup>1</sup> Emily Edson Briggs.

if the nation would like the finest of diamonds in the country to glisten in the executive Mansion, and the most graceful and queenly woman of the day to eat bread and honey in the national pantry, they will hasten to withdraw their support from any military chieftain, and bestow the awful burden upon a man who at this very moment is staggering under as much as any faithful public servant can very well carry.

Chief Justice Chase was staggering under the load of presiding over the impeachment of President Johnson. The trial opened on February 24th, and closed May 26th. For those ten long weeks the Senate Chamber was filled with spectators, with women occupying the seats in the balconies: they "sail into the gentlemen's gallery, shake out the silken, feathery crinoline, rub their little gloved hands in an ecstasy of delight."

"Who is that picture of delicacy and grace arrayed in silk tinted with the shade of a dead forest leaf, with dead gold ornaments to match?"

"Why that is the queen of fashion—the wife of a Senator, the daughter of Chief Justice Chase."

It was usual for Mrs. Sprague to accompany her father to the Capitol and remain throughout the afternoon to watch the conduct of the trial, the great official ordeal of his life.

She sat in the gallery reserved for Senators' wives, always ideally gowned. She had chosen, this spring of 1868, as her favorite color, purple, particularly effective against her clear pale complexion. Admiring senators and prominent visitors in Washington found their way to the "political priestess": one day were counted Garfield, Sherman, Grant, Carl Schurz, Greeley, Conkling. Women journalists, letter writers, scanned her *ensembles* for copy and beggared adjectives in the descrip-

tion. Other women were obscured by heavy gowns; nothing could obscure her. While the wives of the men about her were self-consciously comparing their own appearance with hers, she was holding her self-complaisant, aristocratic poise, indifferent to all commonplace comments.

Each day as the Senate clock pointed to the hour of one, the Chief Justice led the solemn procession of judicial-robed figures to the stage, while the audience rose respectfully until they were seated and the attorneys had greeted them with an obeisance. There was something grand in the way the Chief Justice made his entrance, towering above his colleagues, though he had reached his three-score years, still a Jovian form that wore the magisterial robe well. Through the long April days the proceedings began and they dragged on till the ladies became wearied and restless, as spring tempted to outside diversion—there was “scarcely more air” in the Senate galleries than in “an exhausted receiver”; the wonder was how so many “delicate women” remain so many hours in “such an atmosphere.” The Chief Justice himself “looks worn towards the close of the day and often casts his eyes upward to the place where his daughter sits,” and he seems momentarily revived.

The trial was drawing to an end. The final vote was to be taken on the succeeding Monday, and the town was in a fever of excitement as to the outcome. Kate Chase Sprague had issued invitations to a dinner for the preceding Saturday evening, including in her list a number of the “uncertain senators,” thus bringing down an avalanche of malediction from the radicals upon the head of the Chief Justice: he was using his influence to bring about a verdict of acquittal, ’twas said, and spies

were set to watch all incoming guests at the Sprague house. Forty-eight hours afterwards, the President was being serenaded in the White House grounds, and the Chief Justice was being cursed for having saved the "malefactor" by directing the cast of the one deciding vote, though he strongly denied the accusation.

Nevertheless, the impression was fixed that the Judge was acting in a partisan spirit that he might put himself into favor with the Democrats, who, as he hoped, would make him their candidate in the coming convention. The Republicans had already chosen the war hero, Grant.

## XVI

### KATE CHASE, POLITICIAN

**B**Y the year 1868, a fixed idea had fastened itself upon the public mind, that the Chief Justice was being consumed with the fever of ambition. He himself refused to acknowledge this condition. Writing to an old friend, he said, "I rather think you give me credit for more political ambition than I have. My consciousness does not assure me of any which I could not subordinate cheerfully to the claims of duty." And again: "The subject of the Presidency has become distasteful to me. Some will say 'sour grapes'; and there may be some ground for the application of the thrust. But I really think that I am not half so ambitious of place as I am dependent on it."

On the other hand, only the previous year, he had confessed to his younger daughter—to whom he spoke his heart most frankly—his satisfaction over the prospect of being chosen as the people's favorite leader: "it does look now that if there were no military names before the public the choice of the people might fall upon me. . . . But there are other non-military men who have zealous friends; and I can easily see that I am not much more likely to be preferred than I was in 1860 or 1864. So I make myself contented or try to." Still the sweet dream mulled in his mind: "It seems to me that I could accomplish, if I had the power, much that would be beneficial to the country, and I am not

insensible to the distinctions of the Chief Magistracy. But if the people don't want my services, I have no right to complain and if the distinctions are not to be mine, I shall by no means repine. No man has any claim to such distinctions in a country like ours."

The Chase followers did not leave his nomination to the uncertain demand of a "grateful people." They began early to organize their forces. As far back as the fall of '66, his Union Republican friends were at work, as is indicated by his sometime secretary,<sup>1</sup> who suggested that Mr. Chase meet men who could be of certain use to him in a "canvas such as your friends propose to make." The field was to cover the entire country, North, East, South, and West. From all quarters came promises of loyal support. This widespread enthusiasm heartened the Chief Justice, since it appeared to be a spontaneous call of the people.

In Washington the rallying point of the campaign centered around the candidate and his leader, Kate Chase Sprague. This fact the press correspondents were not slow to recognize.

Mr. Chase's 'Wednesday Evenings' have always been the delight of the so-called 'radicals' or the extreme Republicans . . . people of every shade of opinion go there; but as the world knows, Mr. Chase is the favorite of the more pronounced Republicans.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Chase's residence is the headquarters of the radical Republicans. The politicians of that party, black and white, press around the Chief Justice, pay special court to him more than to any other candidate, and indirectly regard him as the coming man. Mrs. Sprague, the center of the fashionable female politicians in Washington, may be regarded as, the

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Schuckers to S. P. Chase, Nov. 13, 1866.

<sup>2</sup> *The Independent*, Feb. 27, 1868.

Mme. Recamier, Mme. Roland, or Mme. Tallien, I don't know which, and the most splendid woman amid the Republican politicians of Washington. These ladies have made up the slate for the Presidential programme and chances. They are hand in hand with the Southern radical politicians of Washington, who surround them, and they have calculated to a certainty that the whole Southern States will go for Mr. Chase.<sup>3</sup>

The drawing room of the red brick mansion had been turned into a political club, yet we should not be led to think of Kate Chase Sprague as the high priestess of a loud-voiced, rough and ready group. The women who joined her as parlor lobbyists were not of the Mary Walker type, in masculine attire or bloomers. Kate Chase did not relinquish elegance when she talked politics. She wore Worth gowns and retained her grand manner in harmony with the gown. Never was she handsomer or more magnetic. Her will was steeled for the battle and she wore her armor unconcealed. The world might look on and condemn—as it did. She knew well what was thought and said of her so-called poisonous ambition, which was “breeding a viper in her heart,” as one feminine newspaper correspondent puts it.

As winter turned into spring, the Chase prospects grew less hopeful; he had not pleased the radicals during the impeachment trial; moreover, the military hero, Ulysses S. Grant, who had saved his country, should be rewarded. When this trend in the Republican ranks became evident, the Democratic admirers of the Chief Justice began to reconnoitre. He was, according to his own declaration, a staunch advocate of equal rights for all, black or white: he was moderate in his reconstruction measures, declaring for general amnesty. Of all the

<sup>3</sup> *New York Herald*, Jan. 20, 1868.



Northerners it was said he could poll the largest vote in the South. *Chase, the only man who can beat Grant*, became a slogan among his friends. As yet it had not been shouted abroad. As yet no public announcement of the Chase candidacy had been given out.

Under the caption, "The Folded Banner," an editorial in a widely circulated journal<sup>4</sup> that assumed intimate knowledge of Mr. Chase's political position was published: that he would not accept the Republican nomination if it were offered, that he would accept the same honor from the hands of the Democrats if the platform were broad enough to include his principles of universal suffrage; a flamboyant announcement that caused Mr. Chase great discomfiture. He had spoken "very freely" to the writer during a friendly call, little thinking he was "on trial" before an editor. The Chief Justice never was more hotly indignant and he was not slow in expressing his displeasure of the "Flaming Manifesto."<sup>5</sup>

Outside of Chase's immediate political circle of friends, much doubt and even regret was expressed that he would or should accept the nomination if offered, that he would allow himself to be used by a party with which he had not been active, he who wore the sacred robes of the Chief Justiceship. His long-time friend, Horace Greeley, gives him warning.<sup>6</sup>

Very little has lately been said about the abduction and appropriation of Chief Justice Chase, but we warn His Honor still to keep upon his guard. . . . The touching confidence which presupposes that Chief Justice Chase is to be had for the asking would not seem to argue a very high opinion of

<sup>4</sup> *New York Independent*.

<sup>5</sup> S. P. Chase to Theodore Tilton, Apr. 19, 1868.

<sup>6</sup> *New York Tribune*, May 23, 1868.

the integrity of human nature; and we really do not know why the Democracy should have such an opinion.

The warning was not heeded.

The Democratic Convention was about to open in New York and Kate Chase Sprague was early on the ground with her husband, though they stopped at different hotels. Governor Sprague and his brother, Amasa, were at the Rhode Island headquarters; Mrs. Sprague affiliated with the New York group. The name Chase was more in the air than any one of the nineteen or twenty other names, so Kate observed. Philadelphia sent one hundred members of the Chase Club, who threw their banners on the outer wall of their hotel. One report had it that the Chief Justice had engaged rooms at the St. Cloud, whereas he was staying in seclusion in Washington, reading his mail, receiving reporters, and playing a game of croquet solitaire.

At two minutes past twelve o'clock, July the Fourth, the delegates assembled at the newly opened Tammany Hall. Long before that hour "all avenues to the Temple were filled with a motley crowd, standing in the hot sun just outside the magic portal." "Tickets! Tickets!" was the cry. Women crowded into the galleries and fanned themselves with "more vigor than grace"—all save Kate Chase Sprague who never had been known to lose her grace since she was grace personified. It had been reported that the Woman's Rights cause would be represented by the leading spirit, the Honorable Susan B. Anthony, who had prepared a petition begging that she might appear in person. The letter drew forth only derision. "Miss Susan B. Anthony," wrote Horace Greeley, "has our sincere pity. She has been an ardent suitor of democracy, and they received her overtures

with screams of laughter.”<sup>7</sup> Kate Chase Sprague, it appears, was the only woman to command respect, if it may be judged by chivalrous politeness extended her.

August Belmont, the convention chairman, pounded his gavel and the balloting began, cautiously at first. Ohio registered its vote for Pendleton—and again was Chase repudiated by his own State. Four days of anxious waiting and nothing decisive accomplished; Kate was becoming impatient: her father’s name had not been presented before the convention, as promised by the New York delegation. On the evening of July 8th, a special meeting of Chase supporters was held, and the policy of promptly nominating him was advocated; at another meeting, “strictly private,” held the next morning, resolutions to nominate Chase were presented. Mrs. Sprague’s energetic spirit was recognized behind these pressures to bring her father’s name forward. When the objection was made that the platform as drawn up would not be acceptable to the Chief Justice, Kate sent him a telegram, stating the two questionable points. He replied, “The platform is acceptable.”

She informed him daily of the progress of events—or rather the lack of progress. One of her early letters is full of hope:

The excitement here is intense. The outside pressure is very great, and ‘Chase’ is the password in the throng gathered about Tammany Hall. Pendleton and Johnson have already been put in nomination but no balloting has yet begun. There are various opinions about the duration of the Convention. The feeling improves every hour and there is a growing confidence everywhere that you will ultimately be

<sup>7</sup> *New York Tribune*, July 7, 1868.

the choice. There are snares and pitfalls everywhere. Oh, if this convention would only have the courage to do right.

Affectionately and ambitiously for Country, the Democracy and its Noblest Patriot and Statesman,

Your daughter, K. C. Sprague.

P.S. Your friends suggest that as soon as you see the Platform which, of course, you will see tonight in the Press, you send such telegrams as may be advisable and *necessary* to read in *open Convention*.

We have no documents to show whether or not the Chief Justice acceded to his daughter's request. We have, though, a letter he wrote her at this time, in which he shows more anxiety for her than for himself:

I am afraid, my darling, that you are acting too much the politician. Have a care. Don't do or say anything which may not be proclaimed from the house tops. I am so anxious about you that I cannot help wishing you were in Narragansett or here, where I take all things very quietly, play croquet nearly every evening and sleep as soundly as the heat will let me every night.

Her father's desire that Katie might be within the safety and comfort of home met with only casual comment from her. The battle was on. She could not leave the front. Meanwhile, the candidate, around whose name so great clamor was being raised, remained "perfectly tranquil," and expressed to a reporter who called upon him, the optimistic faith that all would be for the best and that "any one of the gentlemen whose names have been mentioned in New York would make a good President"—a magnanimous if indiscriminating judgment.

July tenth, the sixth day of the Convention and the critical day. Salmon P. Chase received a one-half vote, a so-called "compliment to the fractional currency of the former Secretary of the Treasury"—or was it given

to save a thousand-dollar wager that he would not be mentioned in convention? On the twenty-first ballot, Massachusetts gave a hesitating four votes and the galleries, led by Mrs. Sprague and her circle, applauded exultantly. The crisis had come, the twenty-second ballot. The roll call had reached the O's when an Ohio delegate mounted a chair to announce that his State had, through a long course of balloting, supported one of her own citizens, George H. Pendleton, "but now that he had withdrawn his name from the convention, the delegation had decided to demand that the convention put in nomination"—Kate Chase Sprague's heart was beating furiously—"Horatio Seymour of New York." She relaxed slightly, her face perplexed. Had not Mr. Seymour promised to make the nominating speech for her father? There must be some mistake; her eyes brightened—Mr. Seymour would decline and the name of Chase would still carry.

When the applause for Seymour had died down a bit, the gentleman from Ohio concluded his speech with the pointed epigram, "a man whom the Presidency had sought, but who had not sought the Presidency," which brought out increased applause and calls for Mr. Seymour, who thanked the Convention but declined the honor. "Gentlemen, your candidate I could not be." Men leaped from their seats, waved handkerchiefs and hats, while they shouted and the galleries cheered: "Seymour, Seymour!" rent the air until he stepped forward again and declined—this time more gently than before—it was plainly difficult to say nay to such flattering advances. Still he had promised to nominate Salmon P. Chase, and the daughter was looking down on him from the gallery. Once more he rose to refuse

the honor thrust upon him, when "one of his particular friends" stopped him with the admonition, "If you do it, you are forever politically damned." Five minutes later, Horatio Seymour was being acclaimed the candidate for the Presidency of the Democratic Party. Wild pandemonium prevailed.

Kate Chase Sprague, weak with disappointment, humiliation and anger, was quickly surrounded by her friends—all save Colonel Van Buren,<sup>8</sup> who kept out of sight—and who sought to explain away their blame at the failure of what they had promised her would be such a glorious victory. This was the most outrageous deception, she declared. It seemed to her, every move had been planned. It was all a dastardly game to cheat her father. Seymour had played the part of a confidence man. Her friends declared they would never support the New York copperhead, but would throw their influence to Grant and Colfax—small consolation to her. Meantime the two nominees, Seymour and Blair, retired to the Manhattan Club, where at a ratification meeting presided over by Tilden, Seymour said he had been caught by the "overwhelming tide and unable to resist."

What were the feelings of the Chief Justice, the victim of this political maneuver? That he was "utterly overcome by the news and bore it with by no means Christian resignation," one reporter wrote; another related that when told the result of the balloting, the father asked, "How did Katie bear it?" and when assured she bore it well, he seemed satisfied. At a dinner given, on the evening of the 9th by the British Minister,

<sup>8</sup> John D. Van Buren, Jr., the Chase campaign agent.

he remarked quietly, "It looks as though Grant would be our next President."

And what were the feelings of the daughter who was bearing up so well under this blighting defeat? The Chase pride sustained her before the curious world—she had the resolute spirit of Janet Ralston and Alice Corbett—but she was deeply angered against those who had plotted her father's destruction. Her keen mind saw through the cabal, back of the weakness of Van Buren and Seymour to the treachery of the original conspirator. The following day, when her feelings were calmer, her reason in command, she wrote her father her findings in the case:

My dearest Father,

You have been most cruelly deceived and shamefully used by the men whom you trusted implicitly, and the country must suffer for the duplicity. I would not write you yesterday in the excitement . . . until I had carefully gone over in my mind all circumstances that had come under my knowledge of the action of Mr. Van Buren. When I get comfortably settled at Narragansett, I will write out a full and detailed history of my *knowledge* of this matter that cannot fail to convince you of his bad faith. . . .

Mr. Van Buren though constantly at the Manhattan Club, next door, has not been near me. . . . Had Mr. Kennedy had the authority to act for you, you would have been as certainly nominated in the wave of enthusiasm created in the Convention by the one-half vote cast by California day before yesterday, as anything could be. Mr. Van Buren's telegraph (sic) to you 'to answer no questions in regard to the Platform' was the block he put in the way of your nomination—and when at the critical juncture he was at last found, (for he had scarcely been seen in the Convention) he refused to take the responsibility of speaking for you and said he was not authorized. . . . Mr. Tilden and Mr. Seymour have done this work, and Mr. Van Buren has been their tool. This is my honest belief, . . . Do, dear Father in the future, be guided by the advice of some of those who are

devoted to you, but who are more suspicious than your own noble heart will allow you to be.

With all this *you personally* have nothing to regret. Your friends have worked nobly . . . and the universal disappointment today is amazing. Not a flag floats nor is there a semblance of rejoicing visible anywhere.

Your name is a watchword with the people, and many have been betrayed and deceived. . . . You can form no conception of the depression here.

Your devoted,

Katie.<sup>9</sup>

The daughter defeated and defiant craved the chance of avenging the insult to the Chase pride; the father humiliated and subdued suffered from the censures of his character. The repudiation of Henry Ward Beecher cut the deepest, for the two had known one another for thirty-five years; and moreover, the great preacher stood faultless in public esteem—he had not yet fallen from grace in the minds of the people. In refutation of the common belief that he had advocated the nomination of Salmon Portland Chase from the pulpit, the Reverend Beecher published in denial the following anathema.<sup>10</sup>

. . . Never been a Chase man—have for years deemed him like his greenbacks as promising more on the face than they are worth in gold. . . . He is a splendid man to look upon but a poor man to lean upon. Ambition lifts some men toward things noble and good; makes them large and generous. Other men's ambition blurs the sharp lines and distinctions between right and wrong and leaves them in the eagerness of over-selfish desire prey to bad men. I have for years felt Mr. Chase's ambition was consuming the better elements of his nature. . . . The sevenfold humiliations and recantations through which Mr. Chase was required to go for a Democratic nomination, only to see the smiling Seymour looking

<sup>9</sup> Kate Chase Sprague to S. P. Chase, July 10, 1868.

<sup>10</sup> *The Independent*, July 16, 1868.



benignly down upon his lost estate, has no parallel except in the immortal history of Reneke Fuchs.

The object of this pharasaical malediction received the churchman's curse without rancor or revenge in his heart, accepting the obloquy of his enemies with habitual forgiveness. He still had his friends who believed in his integrity, and with the sustainment of his conscience Salmon Portland Chase was able to maintain his self-respect. Ambition, personal desire of power, was now completely purged away. He wished only to serve his fellowmen, free of partisan leading strings. His political creed he expressed at this time to a political friend.<sup>11</sup>

So you see I am in no wise pledged or committed to any platform. I remain what I declared myself in the Senate to be 'a Democrat by the grace of God, free—independent'; full of democratic sympathies and aspirations, but the bondsman of no organization; a sincere lover of my country; a lover of all good and patriotic men whether they agree with me in my special views or not, a man who seeks no other position than that which he holds and who now will accept no other . . . will do whatever he can to promote complete conciliation between the nations, good will between the races & the renewal of the prosperity of every section of the country & especially of that which needs it most, the theater of the late rebellion & who still believes that those great objects can be best promoted by universal suffrage & universal amnesty.

<sup>11</sup> S. P. Chase to Murat Halsted, July 14, 1868.

## XVII

### SENATOR SPRAGUE

CANONCHET," the splendid show place of the Rhode Island coast, was built by Kate Chase Sprague, so 'twas said, with the thought of having an impressive residence where she might entertain men of power, thus putting them under social obligation to her and winning their favor for her cause. Her dream perchance also embraced the vision of this million-dollar castle as the vacation residence of the future president of the United States, and herself his daughter as First Lady of the Land.

Canonchet, surrounded by a park of one thousand acres, with lakes, a river, and dense forests, was fronted by nearly a mile of sea beach. The site, once of the camping ground of the Narragansett Chief Canonchet, later became the property of the Sprague settlers, and was handed down from father to son until it fell in the possession of Governor Sprague. The old farmhouse with no pretension to style served his purpose well as a summer home, but not so his wife who wished to entertain and not to relax; and she early won his consent to rebuild the old house as she desired, unrestrained by him save at one point, that she retain complete the original foundation. Accordingly, she built the new residence around the old. "She did not tear down the old house, she let the new home swallow the old home up," Governor Sprague was wont to remark



CANONGIET



as he showed visitors through this royal abode into which he poured his wealth, "the monument of a woman's folly."

During the Sixties, before the severe, dignified Colonial type of architecture became the vogue, Americans looked to Europe for models. Kate Sprague while touring the Continent drew mental plans and engaged artists and artisans to work her will in wood and stone. In general outline she decided upon the Gothic style as found in certain French castles, modified by Italian details, such as the Pompeian Court with circular fountain and the spiral staircase leading up through the central tower to the handsome lantern at the summit of the third story. From without, the slender turrets presented an effect of lightness, to a poet's eye symbolic of the creator's soaring ambition. The whole effect, however, had little of the dignity of her person, lacking the harmony that grows from within out. "Canonchet" bespoke wealth rather than good taste, though according to the mid-Victorian standard, the home, with its handsome furnishings, its art objects and paintings, its books and sculpture, was greatly admired.

Canonchet opened its doors to guests too late, as it proved, to serve the builder's purpose in full; for following the 1868 *debacle* Salmon Portland Chase made decisive refusal again to enter the political arena, and his dominant daughter was forced to relinquish her ambition. She did have the pleasure, however, of receiving many of her father's friends here: Greeley had his own special room; Garfield and Grant, it is said, also came to enjoy the crisp sea air and to discuss political strategy. Following that bitter day in July, 1868, when defeat spoiled her happiness, Kate came to her palatial

home a different woman, with "one wing broken and trailing on the ground," even as Mme. de Staël in exile, and her heart never again would sing so exuberantly as before.

In fancy we see her as she approaches "Canonchet." She walks slowly through the broad entrance and observes the fountain of carved marble spurting prismatic jets of water; her eyes rest on the marine view of the fresco. She passes up the richly carved staircase embellished by foreign artisans from Italy, which she herself had brought over, a staircase famed as the finest in the country and costing \$50,000 in itself. She opens the door of the unfinished ballroom and closes it again. It will never be finished—dancing is over for her. From room to room she passes through a labyrinth of halls and chambers. Now into the library, where the walls are lined with de luxe editions—and turns away. Once she delighted in books, now her heart seeks other activity. She wanders restlessly outside and walks along the shore to Point Judith lighthouse, her father's favorite walk. The waves no longer beat a refrain of hope to her. She cannot forget that life has betrayed her.

Yet for her father's sake, she must cover her humiliation with a veneer of smiles. Her unhappiness as a wife, too, must be concealed from the curious world. That Kate succeeded in deceiving even her father by pretended happiness, comes out in a letter she wrote him soon after his return to Washington the succeeding fall. The Chief Justice had taken a house with Nettie as his housekeeper. He wrote to his Dearest Kate: "It was a great comfort to leave you and the Governor so well, and you prettier and more lovely, as well as more happy

than I ever saw either of you." So the idealist hugs to his heart the false delusion.

At Canonchet, where wide space and broad horizon lines detached one from the frictions of personal contact, disharmony may more easily have been camouflaged. Exteriorly, Kate continued to be a careful wife, attentive to her duties. During this autumn, Senator Sprague was ill, laid up with a broken leg, and when he recovered sufficiently to return to his office in Providence, a boat was sent down to the ferry for his use, and Kate and her guests went along as escort to see him safe there. On her return to Canonchet, she wrote her father that she felt her "occupation was gone." This brief illness had helped to bring the couple together, but only for the time being.

Underneath, and deep down in the wife's consciousness was a substratum of feeling antagonistic to all harmony towards her husband, who now inspired more of contempt than pity. Senator Sprague's personal habits in themselves furnished an adequate cause for her loss of respect. He drank heavily. On the Senate floor he sometimes appeared intoxicated. At home he often had been so incapacitated from liquor as to be unable to appear before her guests and in society he frequently put her to shame. The story of their sensational clash at a State dinner during the Johnson administration came out in a New York paper: <sup>1</sup>

Senator Sprague's seat at this dinner was between Mrs. Stover and Mrs. Dixon. His wife's was a few seats beyond. Mr. Sprague partook so freely of wine that one of his neighbors seeing him stretch out his hand to replenish his glass, said gently: "I would not take more if I were you," while the other said, "There are a pair of bright eyes looking at

<sup>1</sup> *New York World*, February 20, 1870.

you." "D—— them!" the excited man exclaimed, "They can't see me!" and refilled his glass. Mrs. Sprague leaned forward, fixed her eyes steadily on her husband, and said earnestly: "Yes, they *can* see you, and they are heartily ashamed of you."

This shameful episode occurred some years before Sprague's spectacular Senate speeches that added fresh fuel to burn up the last poor shred of wifely consideration. Senator Sprague, never possessed of a stalwart character, had through the years grown steadily weaker in mind and morals. Yet, during the spring of '69, he stepped forth with a strong stride and evidenced an independence of thought and action astonishing both to his family and his colleagues. On March 4th, he had been returned to the Senate for a second term. During the first six years in the Upper House, he was often absent, and when present rarely spoke more than a few words, and then in discussions on business matters, wages, and the like. The consciousness of his inferior education had kept him silent. Kate had prodded him for long and taunted him with his inability as a speaker, which but deepened his sense of impotence. A little story still current, passed on from mother to son, illustrates his psychology.

It was during a celebrated debate in the Senate and Mrs. Sprague sat in her usual first row seat in the gallery reserved for Senators' wives. She listened until the member from Massachusetts had finished speaking, when she rose and passed out into the corridor, becoming at once the center of an admiring group. Her husband had observed her exit and hastened to join her. "Is there anything I can do for you?" he inquired. "Nothing," she retorted, "except to go in there and



make a speech, and that you *can't* do!" Whereupon he "speechlessly crept away."

The junior Rhode Island Senator had kept his silence throughout his first term. Within a few days after being sworn in for the second time, he took a right-about-face and marched to the forefront, through a series of five sulphurous speeches, which gained for the first time the astonished attention of his brother Senators who scarcely could believe their senses. His erstwhile amiable nature, too, changed suddenly to virulent hatred towards the world in general and a number of persons in particular. Was he insane, they asked? Today, he would be called a pathologic subject for a psychiatrist. What was the cause of this seeming abrupt descent to dementia?

Outwardly, Sprague's business continued as prosperous as ever. After the war, the Spragues were paying taxes on property said to have a value of twenty-five millions. The firm had extended its plants—on borrowed money, however, as it later was revealed; domestic troubles were not noticeably aggravated. The million-dollar home was the pride of the Senator's heart, so it was said. What could be the cause of his misanthropy? Business rivalry had disturbed his self-complacence. Brown and Ives, wealthy woolen manufacturers, had become the object of Sprague's jealousy and what sharpened his animosity was the fact that they belonged to the aristocracy of Providence, which had omitted him from its social roster. As his anger grew, it included all persons related to the rival firm. He attacked his former friend and superior officer, General Burnside, who nine years before, the Boy Governor had called to command the first regiment of volunteers, and to whom, later in

the War he had recommended that a sword be presented for "gallant and praiseworthy conduct." Senator Anthony, *Pater Senatus* of the Upper House, came in for his share of the junior member's venom. Lastly, the Sprague guns were aimed at President Grant and the Congress of the United States. No one was spared.

Senator Sprague's maiden speech was delivered on a Bill to Loan the People Money, which he was sponsoring,<sup>2</sup> and which he argued would "put out of existence great bankers, traders, shipmasters, landed monopolies, manufacturers, telegraph and railroad, banking and insurance corporations," and distribute these powers more equably among the people. He took opportunity to discuss public corruption at length, charging Congress with the exercise of power to "control the executive." The high point of his jeremiad was reached in the warning of national disaster. "If, Sirs, you are not standing in a volcano, I am no judge of the condition of things."

His words bearing reference to President Grant struck the ear with bold violence. "If any man foists himself upon the people of this country because of past services, unless he is successful in continuing these services in the interest of the people, he is a worthless instrument and should be abandoned at once." Turning to the Speaker, he shouted: "Sir, the Senate controls today the executive, the legislative and the material interests of this country."

Referring to the inflated wealth and extravagance of the country, he prophesied disaster to employers and employees alike, citing incidentally his own possible downfall. "I have in the employment directly under my charge, nearly 10,000 hands. I know the condition

<sup>2</sup> *Congressional Globe*, Mar. 29, 1869.

of that life; and I know that if the operation of those mills closed for two weeks, the towns, or those who employ them, must take care of the operatives." Senator Sprague was giving a startling forecast of his coming financial failure and the general panic of '73. The Sprague banks, he said, were "owned by six hundred people." "My interest and the interest I represent would be something like \$20,000." The speech closes with, "The condition of this country . . . is like that of a mad horse in full run with broken rein, or a steam engine without a regulator"—not unlike the speaker himself, one might have thought.

Senator Sprague was standing before an electrified audience. His slender body stretched to its full height seemed taller than normal, his lustrous eyes shooting fire, his long hair in unstudied disorder, the nostrils of his large nose distended like those of a war horse—in all a compelling presence. The Senate and the galleries were held spellbound, half in amazement, half in amusement. Kate's husband finally was something more than the Calico King. He was a pseudo statesman, at least. If mad, he had spoken some plain truths and uttered some true prophecies. A week later he made his final assault.<sup>3</sup> The galleries were crowded. Mrs. Sprague sat pale and haughty in her usual seat. She had come to listen to her husband, an altogether novel experience. He began:

Mr. President, the attendance today is significant. Whether the crowd in the galleries are here from curiosity or from deep interest in the present condition of the country, each one that occupies these seats can better judge. I have not come before the Senate or the country for any idle display . . . or for purpose of sensation. . . . It has always been

<sup>3</sup> April 8, 1869.

my nature to hide myself from the public gaze. . . . I am supposed to be rich and I am made the objective point for solutions for employment. . . . Why slur my utterances, why underrate the person who utters them, his arguments, his facts and his position. . . . I advocate a true system of finance based on a great principle . . . the power of the people.

He then launched into his attack on the "lawyers" who have "always made up the majority in the Senate." He criticized the framers of the Constitution, then coming back to himself and his financial condition, he said, "No man knows unless he conducts a large business how sensitive credit is in times of stringency in the money market. It is like the virtue of a woman, easy to be stabbed in secret. The slander gathers strength as it goes and the character has suffered a wound from which it never recovers." (Was Kate's husband throwing out an innuendo against his wife touching her girlish escapades, he, ten years later, was to investigate?) He then flung a bomb into the polite circles of society, ex-coriating the fashionable folk who go to Europe and bring back foreign customs of a corrupt civilization, with its extravagance and laxity of morals. At this point, the speaker is said to have paused and looked into the gallery where sat his wife—whether by intention or by accident, who can say? He himself denied it as a conscious gesture of reproach.

It was so interpreted by the audience, who took it as a deliberate insult to Kate Chase. "It was like a hot cannon ball hissing into the chamber . . . there was a general leaping of swords from their scabbards to the defense of the American woman, to the defense of the insulted queen of the capitol."<sup>4</sup> The speaker's

<sup>4</sup> Appendix: *The Merchant's Wife*, Mary Eliza Viall.

mind then glances back over his own meteoric career, his entrance into politics, his part in the War, the alleged cowardice of the rich men of his regiment: "Remember there is nothing so cowardly as \$500,000—except a million." Had he forgotten the cost of his governorship?

Reverberation from the Senator's artillery of words was heard for long; in the lobbies of hotels, at private dinners, the Sprague explosion was discussed from all angles, domestic and political. Washington was never more excited; the reaction as mirrored in the daily press wavered between admiration and consternation at the doctrines enunciated and the clean sweep of the indictment of men and things. One wrote: "These attacks certainly made a profound sensation, not because Sprague is strong—for he has only egotism, pluck and vacuity to trade on—but the citadel is rotten to the core, and any Republican can scare the radical Senate, if he would just turn State's evidence as Sprague has." The publicity gained through this remarkable series of speeches which he scattered in pamphlet form over the country may be reckoned by the thousands of communications sent him—the postoffice was buried for the time being. Several Senators made counter-attacks on Sprague; he in turn read a hundred or more of these letters, which commended him for his stand against the money power.<sup>5</sup>

The workingmen of Washington serenaded Sprague at his home one evening and he responded with a rousing speech, while his father-in-law stood "beaming at his side." In Sprague's own home State the atmosphere was heated to the boiling point. Had he not degraded

<sup>5</sup> *Congressional Globe* gives 31 columns to Sprague's Letters.

the reputation of every family that had had a son in the First Regiment? "The sting was felt in nearly every home in the State." Resolutions were drawn up by the Color Company and read and adopted at a meeting at the armory of the Newport Artillery<sup>6</sup> repudiating the "slanders uttered by a seeker of notoriety . . . suddenly terminating his long and unprofitable silence to calumniate our most honored Regiment and that of its beloved commander."<sup>7</sup> . . .

While the State of Rhode Island, at the time, had no means of inflicting merited punishment upon its one-time favorite son, the city of Providence found a simple and easy method of administering a rebuke. The Mayor, Thomas Arthur Doyle, had married a sister of the Senator in order to make sure his tenure of office. The citizens in their fury . . . deposed him for a single year, after which he was reinstated.<sup>8</sup>

Retaliation had begun its work to cut adrift William Sprague from the safe and friendly harborage of his native heath. Comments on his financial philosophy have drifted down to us, characterized as a series of harangues on the currency, indicative of his lack of consistency and political acumen. One colloquy ran as follows:

" 'Shall we allow speculators in the name of Uncle Sam to sue for the people's money?' Senator Sprague has asked.

" 'But we are in haste to pay our debts' Congress replies.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix: *Resolutions*.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. Burnside.

<sup>8</sup> George S. Peck, M.D., *Life and Character of William Sprague* (an unpublished article).

"Then let the noble women of this country say, 'No more of our gold shall drift seaward to bring us back jewels, silks and knick-knacks! Let the graceful, elegant wife of Senator Sprague be content with a wardrobe which vies in costliness with that of a European princess:—thirty silk walking dresses, all made to fit the same exquisite image—no more!'"—Ironical allusion to the multitude of costumes Kate Chase Sprague imported from Paris.

And what were the feelings of the Chase family? How did they react to this unlooked-for and melodramatic publicity? The leading woman of the act did not make her appearance in the anti-climax scene. Kate left the city after the delivery of her husband's last speech. The manner of her exit from the Senate Gallery is told us by her dearest enemy, in her purple patched narrative.<sup>9</sup>

That Kate Chase Sprague was shamed and angry to the very depths of her nature is not difficult to believe. She fled the city unable to meet the stare of the public, even of her own domestics. Her sister was out of Washington during the time of the Sprague explosion. The reverberation reached her in the South where she was visiting; she was greatly troubled; she thought Senator Sprague should be given advice. Her feelings were most kindly towards her brother-in-law, who personally had always been fond of Nettie; had it not been for his advancement of funds, she could not have had her year and a half of European travel and study; she wished him well and in her solicitude suggested that "advice" might be helpful, and wrote her father

<sup>9</sup> *The Merchant's Wife*, by Mary Eliza Viall (see Appendix).

urging that he apply the soothing poultice; to which the Chief Justice responds in his tolerant tone: <sup>10</sup>

I am not at all sure that the particular views which the Governor just now thinks most important and practicable will turn out to be so; but, think he is doing much to attract public attention to public matters in new aspects; showing unexpected power and resources; and may safely be left to find his own way and correct his own errors, if any. A man is only a grown child; and as the child will instinctively pick himself up when he falls and keep out of the pond when he has once tumbled in, so the man will retrieve his own mishaps and amend his own mistakes. Advice is sometimes, doubtless, very good; especially when one asks for it, and the adviser loves the advised.

Which conditions did not fall within the relationship of the Chief Justice and his son-in-law. Senator Sprague was not in the mood either to ask or take advice, and much water had flowed over the Sprague's marital mill race since the beginning, when Kate's father could testify that he "loved" her husband "almost as much as she does." The love-sparkles are now dead in the home life. He can now give the younger man only his good will—"everything but love," as he once wrote in a complimentary close to a letter sent to Katie.

Nevertheless, Chief Justice Chase had not forgotten his financial obligation to Senator Sprague and after leaving Washington on his Southern Circuit he wrote his son-in-law, enclosing a statement of the account, together with a check for a part of the amount, regretting his inability to complete the payments. He adds a sympathetic request for a couple of dozen or more of the Sprague speeches, closing with, "Don't forget this, and don't forget your promise to come to Richmond while I am there. . . . All my sympathies and wishes

<sup>10</sup> S. P. Chase to Nettie Chase, April 12, 1869.



are with you. May God keep you from all evil and enable you to do great things for your country. Faithfully and affectionately S. P. Chase.”<sup>11</sup>

Never perhaps was the magnanimity of Chase's nature put to a more trying test. Between the two fires of Kate's shame and indignation and the jealous rage of her husband, the home was threatened. Only through the calm counsel of the Chief Justice was this catastrophe averted—though the fires smouldered on. Before he left Washington he had attempted to gain the confidence of Sprague and to harmonize the conflicting elements between him and his wife. The father writes her to refrain from criticism—an impossible thing for Kate.

My advice to you is not to criticize your husband's public action even in your thoughts. Of course you say nothing to outsiders except all you can say honestly in agreement and approval. But you may write something else to him, which will do harm rather than good. He cannot take criticism from you now patiently. Let him take his own course without any words but cheer and support. His own judgment will correct what may prove erroneous.

As I wrote you he seemed gratified by something you had written; but I found afterwards that there was some admonition in the letter which he did not like, though he said nothing from which I could infer anything more than this.

He went to New York last Friday by the noon train, and before he went I had a conversation with him. I found him under some excitement. He said he had been sincerely anxious to have peace and good will restored; but could not do anything which was not misinterpreted by you, and that you seemed all the time to make up a case against him or defend yourself against him. That very morning, he said, that, having missed some things for several days, he had gone into your room and found the small trunk or box in which they and other things—papers I understood—were

<sup>11</sup> S. P. Chase to William Sprague, May 2, 1869.

and packages taken out of it which were sealed up and one in particular which contained your letters from Col. — broken open and the letters taken away. He then spoke of your coming into his dressing room when you thought he was asleep and searching his pockets. This matter you had explained to me and I tried to make the same explanation to him but what had first occurred made it impossible to get a hearing. . . .<sup>12</sup>

Upon the return of Mrs. Sprague to Washington, she writes her father promising to heed his admonitions, and he again sends her spiritual counsel and religious consolation, with the churchman's charge to accept her ordeal as a God-given trial:

My darling Katie,

Your letter by express came to me here by mail from Washington this morning. I read it with profound interest and the deepest sympathy for you. It is my firm faith that you have only to carry out the purpose you express, with patience and perseverance, to win a happy issue. Trust God, have faith in Christ, accuse no one but yourself, cherish every wifely sentiment whether now reciprocated or not, have no disguises with your husband, let your conduct be as the day, and all will come right. God is trying you severely now. If you take the trial as a loving child of God it will make you better and happier, and bring you nearer to Him where perfect safety is. Don't rebel, or let impatience be suffered in your thoughts. Make all happy around you. Make Willie happy, and Nettie, and the domestics. Overcome your own temper, and be transparently truthful.

What I wrote you was in warning, not in distrust. You have very little idea what dreadful things are said; and you cannot be too careful. On the other hand let no despairing thoughts find lodgment in your soul. . . .

Good sentences and well pronounced. "Do not rebel. . . . Overcome your own temper and be transparently truthful." Truthful!—when her own life was a tissue of falsehood. And she must go on playing the part of

<sup>12</sup> S. P. Chase to Kate Chase Sprague, May 4, 1869.

a dutiful wife. Though utterly repugnant to her she must perform all the obligation of the marriage covenant. "Wives submit yourselves to your husbands,"—this is the law and the prophets. Love, honor and obey, when the very fountain head of plighted faith is dried up, through suspicion on the part of the husband. In him, the psychosis of jealousy had become deep seated; in her, anger and contempt had seared all wifely feeling. "Desperate beating of wings and breast against the bars, trailing slime and winding web of lies impossible to escape from."

## XVIII

### FATEFUL YEARS

THE summer of '69 was long for Mrs. Sprague while waiting at Canonchet for the babe that was to arrive in October. No easing pride and joy of anticipation was there to carry her through the wearisome months. She could feel only shame to usher into life a child parented by Lust and Hatred, to be dwarfed by an environment of Discord. But the event was inevitable. She was a prisoner, so why beat her broken wings against the gilded bars? She strove to control her turbulent spirit. Alas, the lessons of love and faith her father tried to instill were all too difficult to learn. She grew introspective and a touch of settled sadness came into her glorious eyes and an ever so slight droop to her proud mouth.

The babe was a girl, and was named Ethel. The mother would have preferred a boy to carry the name of Chase. This time there could be no reason against it: but *Salmina!* that would be ridiculous. The grandfather wrote a congratulatory letter consoling his Katie in her disappointment over the sex of the baby, and declaring his liking for girls. (It is recalled that his own children all were daughters.)

. . . I congratulate you on being the mother of such a dear pretty little one. And I am glad that the baby is a girl. For my part I like girls rather better than boys, though I would, I believe, have put up with one boy—perhaps two—



KATE CHASE, AS MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS



for the sake of having a brother apiece for you & Nettie. But *girls* are *nice*, and it will be so good for Willie to have a little sister. It is a great thing to have a little sister. It is a great thing to have charge of a little mortal, and to know that the character of all its life here below depends so largely on the direction given to the setting out. How much more to have charge of young *immortals*, with all the influences that mothers necessarily possess. Let these things, my dear Child, draw you closer & closer to the Saviour.

This letter, tintured with melancholy, written from Washington in the bleak November, suggests that the Chief Justice, like the year, had reached the sere and yellow period of life; he was reminiscent as he drove past the old camping ground where the early romance of his daughter was enacted.

There is nothing new to tell you here. Our goings on are pretty much the same from day to day. Yesterday I varied the monotony a trifle by going out to my new purchase, after the conference was over, about half past four. It was a bleak November afternoon. I thought of you and the Governor as we (Parsons and I) rode by the old Rhode Island Camping ground. The trees where Ballou lay with his regiment were almost bare. Wind and frost have dealt roughly with the foliage.

Salmon Portland Chase may well have pondered also on the desolation wrought upon the happiness of the couple whose love, begun in the merry month of May, less than ten years before, now already was irretrievably dying, if not quite dead. For himself, he felt life was shortening to its close, an event he sensed with a sureness his friends could not recognize, for his outward appearance belied his inner feelings. Frequently through the years since that December night in '46, when he suffered a slight stroke, he had felt symptoms of a similar attack. His journals reveal it if his letters

do not; his was a secretive nature: he kept his sorrows within himself, accepting what came to him as the will of his Father, without whining or complaint.

He had done his life work, more than the average man accomplishes in twice the number of years. He had earned his retirement from the world's turmoil. Yet, never would his Scotch blood ask quarter; he would fight on to the last. Nevertheless, he granted himself the right to choose under what conditions he would live out his last days, and he chose privacy and peace. At Edgewood, he might indulge his inherent love of country life, so he hoped. This no inconsiderable domain included an estate of forty acres, on the brow of which stood a dignified old mansion with a fine grove of pines on the slope below. Edgewood, a hundred or more years old, was built of imported brick laid in Flemish fashion, end and side alternating: within, Italian marble for its fireplaces, South American mahogany for its wood-work. Chase for many years had known the place.

When a young man of twenty, a poor pedagogue of Washington, he one day had visited Col. Berry's home, had walked through the grounds and admired the view of the Capitol in the distance and half in jest had remarked, "Someday, I will own this place." Such is the magic of a wish, forty years afterwards he made good his vow. The property now passed out of the Berry family into that of Chase. One may read the copy of the deed in the recorder's office in Washington.<sup>1</sup>

It was with keen satisfaction that the Chief Justice

<sup>1</sup> Allen Lucien Berry et ux to Salmon P. Chase . . . "this Indenture made the twentieth day of September in the year one thousand eight hundred and sixty-nine . . . for consideration of the sum of Twenty-two thousand dollars current money of the United States to them in hand paid. . . ."



now nearing three-score and two years in age, contemplated his purchase. The house though "bare and worn" looked "beautiful" to him that late autumn day in '69. "The prospect of the Capitol and the Potomac beyond and the hills is splendid, nothing can be finer," he wrote Kate. "If I had ten thousand dollars to spare I really believe I would spend more than half the winter there. It is not too far for a good walk—only three miles to the Capitol—less than an hour's walk either way." (Fancy a Chief Justice today reckoning thus!) He had not that day ten thousand dollars to spend, yet during the succeeding three years his expenditures on the place far exceeded that amount; the cost alone of restoring the old mansion and fitting it out with modern improvements approximated twelve thousand dollars,—“almost as much as to build a new one,” he wrote a friend.

But this November day he looked forward to the project with the gusto of a young country gentleman, rather than an ageing Chief Justice. In prospect it appeared easy to accomplish: the planting of orchards and vineyards, the building of barn, digging of well and laying out of roadway; he did not forecast the accidents and delays, the bunglings and bickerings among his workmen, which under his immediate supervision might have been forestalled. Before another Autumn, Fate had interfered with his plans.

By the spring of 1870, his energy was broken, he had lost desire to exert himself, his correspondence he could no longer keep up without the assistance of a secretary; scarcely could he whip up his pen to write to his daughters. Nevertheless, during the summer, at the importuning of a party of friends about to take a West-

ern jaunt, he was persuaded to join them. Nettie accompanied him. On their return trip, while on the train between Niagara and Albany, the Chief Justice was stricken with paralysis, so visibly affected as to be unable to speak intelligibly. When the train arrived in New York, he was driven to the Hoffman House, where shortly after Kate and her husband came and took him to Canonchet.

He remained here into the autumn and early winter, receiving the constant ministrations of his daughters and the devoted attendance of his son-in-law, who often acted as masseur. The invalid slowly improved. In October, while Nettie was absent a few days from his bedside, visiting friends in New York City, he reported conditions at Canonchet to her.

The children are well and so is Kate. The baby grows in grace and beauty day by day, and I look soon to see her walking and talking. Willie improves continually. The Governor, as long as Kate was absent, was very constant in his attendance, coming down every night.<sup>2</sup> I am still kept on a short diet; but I suppose it is best for me. Please bring me a bottle of cologne and a good *modern arithmetic*.

Toilet water and arithmetic!—tokens of returning interest in life. No sign of zest for politics however. Indeed, since that July day in '68, when his name was made a political pawn, he had evidenced scant desire for publicity.

In spite of this, his Democratic friends had not ceased prodding him to enter the arena. Disgruntled with the Convention's former choice of Seymour, they proposed substituting the name, *Chase*. He expressed himself emphatically opposed to the scheme, saying

<sup>2</sup> From his office in Providence to Narragansett Pier.

that under no circumstances would he consent to it, but nothing daunted, the tenacious leaders were determined to feature Mr. Chase as their favorite candidate. During July, '70, the New York Committee were framing a platform. A portion of the financial plank was forwarded the Chief Justice for his approval. In reply he wired back, "Am not prepared to say till I have seen the whole. Shall be grateful personally if friends will agree not to have my name presented to the Convention." His admirers continued to press the matter, believing him to be the only man who could defeat Grant's reelection.

In reply to the question what principles he would advocate, he replied, "I am a democratic Democrat, as you know, and have never asked of the Democratic party anything except fidelity to democratic principles." Sick as he was, and still remembering his treacherous treatment at the hands of the political leaders, he was not unwilling to sacrifice himself to "the best interests of the country." Commenting on the terms of the platform which referred to himself, he wrote:

Its first sentence seems to place one in the position of a man desiring a nomination for the Presidency. I do not desire it. There has been a time when I did. I may say this frankly, and say just as frankly that I have no such desire. If those who agree with me in principle think that my nomination will promote the interests of the country, I shall not refuse the use of my name. But I shall not seek a nomination, nor am I willing to seem to seek it. This with no trace of disappointed ambition.

Though he was ready to be burned at the stake, a martyr to his country, we have no indication that Kate Chase Sprague furthered the sacrifice of her father.

After wearing months at his bedside, her will was relaxed of all desire save to see him restored to health.

That coming winter, the Chief Justice was not in his seat in the Supreme Court. "Neither hopeful nor despairing," he resigned himself to the inevitable. As spring came on once more, he felt a fresh renewal of life and was able to return to Washington with his Nettie, guests at the Sprague residence. His friends were shocked at his changed appearance: he had lost weight and he had grown visibly older. But he still had his unebbing courage and his mind appeared as able as ever. He keyed himself up for a great event in his life, the marriage of his younger daughter, Nettie, to William S. Hoyt.<sup>3</sup> Though approving of the match, the father anticipated the wedding with mingled pride and regret, and he steeled himself with iron will to go through the ordeal and play his part as the one to give his daughter away, and later to say a long farewell, for the honeymoon was to be spent in Europe.

All Washington was wishing good luck to the bride who was socially popular; also, Miss Chase was recognized as an artist of note since the publication of her "Mother Goose Rhymes of Different Nations," illustrated by her own drawings. Everyone wished her joy. For some days before the event the guests began to arrive, bridesmaids and groomsmen. Bishop McIlvaine of Ohio, who had married Nettie's father and mother, arrived to perform the ceremony. "So we are on to the great event—certainly and sadly for me," wrote Mr. Chase in his journal. The wedding day shone clear and bright; the father's early morning walk was shortened to one mile; the carriages were started for old St. John's

<sup>3</sup> A cousin of William Sprague and a member of the Sprague firm.

on Lafayette Square; Mr. Chase with Nettie, Kate with Mr. Hoyt, next bridesmaids and groomsmen; and lastly, Senator Sprague with the children in a separate carriage—Master Willie in black velvet suit, Miss Ethel in white cloak over a pink silk frock.

The nuptial party found the church filled with a distinguished company. Though sadly shrunken in physique, the Chief Justice carried himself with austere composure, his precious Nettie clinging closely to him, as they passed slowly up the narrow aisle to the front of the altar, while the soft April light came through the crimson art windows, throwing a warm glow over the scene. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Chief Justice with Mrs. Sprague led the wedding party down the nave to the vestibule entrance. The solemn hymeneal music still sounded, as father and daughter paused behind the pillars of the portico to receive their friends; he calm and sad, she haughty and handsome in turquoise blue velvet, her queenly head against an Elizabethan ruff, the two making an unforgettable picture.

During the summer, the Chief Justice sought health at mineral springs in Michigan and Wisconsin. His friends meanwhile were still pestering him—it had become almost a persecution—to accept the candidacy, as they eagerly scanned the daily press for news of his recovery. From New York came the report that the invalid had gained nine pounds in flesh, that he walked with his “old elasticity,” that his “eyes had recovered their former brightness,” and his “voice its old vigor.” One wrote him: “May God bless you and restore you to good health again. And may a grateful people have the opportunity of placing you at the head of national

affairs in 1872." And another: "I see the Southern papers are naming you for the Presidency. . . . It is the wish of my heart that you should be well and be President."

While on his health quest he had had his photograph taken in a group and sent one to Kate. After scanning it carefully, she could not make up her mind that her father had "grown handsomer under the magic of these magnetic waters"; nor did she think that he should exert himself for the gratification of his political friends. She writes him in a tender, bantering tone:

You probably have seen (still I cut it out & send it to you) an article in the N. Y. Herald advertising a mutual friend of ours for the next Presidency. If you meet him in your travels advise him not to make too many speeches, or attend too many celebrations of one sort or another, but to devote all his energies for a while to getting quite well, that he may yet live a long while to gladden the hearts of his children & if need be serve his country.

My little curly-headed girl came to me Friday with the paperweight containing your photograph (& which I always keep on the table before me, though Willie claims you gave it to him—) & said "I want Grandpa Chase to prum (read come). I hurrah fer Bubnor Sprague, & I hurrah for Chase! Her sentence was a little less connected but that was what she intended. . . . She is only twenty-two months old & she has many of Mother Goose's Melodies, as well as such epics as Good Bye John, "Up in a Balloon" quite pat.

We catch here a fleeting glimpse of Kate Chase Sprague as fond mother. She has stepped down from her throne and is speaking as a simple, devoted daughter, and affectionate sister.

I have had another very charming letter from dear Nettie, a Birthday greeting. I was so pleased that she remembered to think of me that day. I fear I am a good deal of a child

about such things yet. Though the yearning for love is hardly one of the childish things one would wish to put away.

Still craving love and admiration even as she did at the age of three. "Funny Kate! she desires love." Admiration, homage, she never has lacked. Her heart is unsatisfied still.

Another year, and the Queen of Washington had resumed her sway following the birth of her third child, a daughter named Portia. To mark her return into society, she gave a reception for her father, famed for its magnificence. Mrs. Sprague was seemingly unmindful of the impending bankruptcy of her husband's business. Everything bespoke royal splendor even to the decorations. As the guests stepped into the garden at the rear of the house to partake of refreshments, they were amazed by the sight of a flower piece in the form of an immense wheel, the center composed of a mass of dark purple violets, the radiating spokes of alternating white pinks and carnations, with a rim of callas, roses, camellias, orange blossoms, and azaleas, interspersed with shining leaves and tendrils—"one of the most beautiful floral designs ever seen at the Capital." \* "And what a company!" exclaims a beholder. All the higher official society—Kate had coldly shut her door to the new-rich and become exclusive. She aimed to entertain personages rather than people: justices of the Supreme Court, Cabinet Heads, candidates for the Presidency in the coming election.

Chief among them was the "guest of honor," the Honorable the Chief Justice of the United States, "almost his former self." He had walked from Edgewood

\* *New York World*, April 28, 1872.

that evening to receive beside his imperious daughter, she more beautiful than ever, "looking not a day older than when she was married." Ah, but the reporters were under the spell of the goddess' beauty, the magic of her magnetism! She was gowned in a bewildering robe of pale blue satin, embroidered in rose-festoons, her hair held by a bandeau of turquoises and diamonds, with ear-rings to correspond. She was once more acknowledged supreme. She seemed at the zenith of her power, while her father's sun was dropping behind the horizon.

Nevertheless, he had not yet shown the white feather. He had spent the winter at his home and declared himself feeling well. He had attended to his duties on the Supreme Bench without missing a day. He expressed himself as satisfied with his life; his chiefest joy was now in entertaining his children and grandchildren. He wrote in a prideful tone to an old friend.<sup>5</sup>

I write from my home just two miles north from the Capitol, which with the Potomac beyond and the Virginia hills beyond that, is in full view from my seat where I am writing at my library. . . . The whole country is covered with snow which fell yesterday.

My health seems to have improved. I have endured the four months & a half of judicial labor very well and feel as well able to work four & a half months more: but I don't mean to. Mrs. Sprague had a little girl last month, and so did Nettie Hoyt. I have now four grandchildren. But it is time to go to Court. I shall walk to the city.

Another year, and his good feelings were gone. May First, 1873, with an uncanny premonition of death, and a yearning to be near his loved ones, he suddenly left Edgewood to join his daughters and their families in

<sup>5</sup> S. P. Chase to Gerrit Smith, Mar. 1, 1872.



the East. A small farewell breakfast party had assembled; Robert Warden, his secretary-biographer; Miss Walker, the friend of many years, and two of his nieces. The servants were gathered at the door to watch their master depart; Cassy Vaudries, faithful servant for many years, since the beginning of his residence at the Capital City, her eyes filled with tears. To all he said, "God bless you and Good Bye," and the distinguished figure slipped out of Washington. He reached the Hoyt home in New York, where he died.

One week from the day he had left the Capital, his body lay in the Supreme Court Chamber, on the catafalque that had held Lincoln's remains. The casket, covered with the rarest of flowers, was guarded by the messengers who had served him in life. The country mourned Salmon Portland Chase as one of the purest and best of men. He was extolled for his great ability and his devotion to his high office. "The dignity which descended upon him from such illustrious predecessors lost nothing in his hands." <sup>6</sup> Citizens of his home town lauded him: "In his life he exhibited a unity of purpose which guided every act and enabled him to control events. . . . His clear intellect, and his force of character and strength of will made him a marked man in a remarkable era. . . . The world may well pause and say that a great man has fallen." <sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Resolutions of the Supreme Court of the U. S.

<sup>7</sup> Tribute by the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce.

## XIX

### POLITICAL PRIESTESS OF EDGEWOOD

ON that May day in 1873 when Kate Chase saw her father laid away in Washington's Oak Hill Cemetery, her heart said farewell to her counselor, her spiritual adviser, the only person she ever had turned to in time of trouble. She was now alone, and without the moral support upon which she had leaned; and this at a time when the waters of disaster were gathering to overwhelm her soul.

Financial support, which her husband had given her all too freely, was beginning to weaken. The Sprague business, tottering for many months before, finally came down with a crash.<sup>1</sup> It became definitely known that the Sprague assets would amount to a small percentage of their original value, though for ten years the report of conditions showed the Sprague property appraised at two million dollars in excess of debts. In the end, after another ten years of grim holding on, Canonchet itself was threatened, though in '73, no idea of its being involved in the cataclysm was thought of. Governor Sprague, from the close of his second Senate term, in '75, made Canonchet his permanent residence, but Mrs. Sprague was rarely seen in Rhode Island. Edgewood which she inherited by will <sup>2</sup> from her father

<sup>1</sup> Appendix *The Sprague Failure*.

<sup>2</sup> Salmon P. Chase named Henry D. Cooke sole executor. \$10,000 was left to Dartmouth College and an equal sum to Wilberforce College an Ohio institution for colored students; \$600 to a relative, Mrs.

became her acknowledged home when she was not abroad. She did not abandon extravagant and showy tastes with her husband's downfall. She held European education to be an essential for her children. The Sprague's fourth and last child, a daughter named Katherine, was born the fall following the Chief Justice's death. A delicate little thing that never grew up mentally, was this tiny "Kitty" as she was always called. While she was a babe, the mother took her and the other children to Europe. "Crossing the pond" was no more to her than crossing the Ohio was to her grandmother. On her return, on one occasion, Mrs. Sprague visited her mother-in-law in Providence, with whom she remained on the best of terms.<sup>3</sup> An old servant of Mme. Fanny's tells of the maid's memory of the son's wife.

She came in state, with a number of servants, a valet for Willie, a German governess and two French maids. The children were perfect in manners. Willie was a handsome boy. He looked like his father in every feature except his mouth—that was like his mother's. She was a handsome woman, just like a statue with her marble-white complexion. We girls used to peek through the bannisters to look at her. She was just as beautiful whichever way you looked at her. She wore black satin dresses with trains. Her hair was parted simply over her fine forehead. She was inclined to be high-headed. And why not? The Spragues had been richer than the Vanderbilts. They had owned all of New England. Their failure affected Europe. (From an interview.)

Arrived in Washington, Kate Chase Sprague went directly to Edgewood and began to organize her household. She must live grandly and make herself lady of

Auld; the Peale Portrait of John Marshall went to the United States Government.

<sup>3</sup> The story that got into the newspapers of the custom of Grandma Sprague's placing \$250,000 in the bank for each of Katie's babies when they were born, with a gift to Kate of \$50,000 has never been verified.

the manor, with retainers a-many: head-farmer, lodge-keeper, head-gardener, butler; an establishment modelled after that of the landed aristocracy of England. But how did she manage to meet her expenses, was asked, when her daily outlay exceeded her income? The upkeep was enormous, and her incapacity in conserving resources was even more than her father's had been. She was forced to put up at auction his personal belongings.

On the second anniversary of the death of the Chief Justice, May First, 1875, the curious populace tramped muddy boots over the portico and through the entrance into the wide hall full of distracted looking furniture. Visitors peered into the Library, now emptied of its choice volumes—Kate had retained most of them—while from above the door, the bas relief of Salmon Portland Chase looked severely down upon the dismantling of his home. In the dining-room where were mingled quantities of china, silver and glassware, the auctioneer was occupied in classifying articles and getting in mind his sales-story. The parlor presented a chaos of art objects—many marked "Reserved" in Kate's hand: Japanese vases, inlaid cabinets, verd antiques, bronze busts and statuettes and a French gilt clock—on into the back parlor where a portrait of Mr. Chase in his younger days hung above a bust of Lord Byron, the two profiles not dissimilar.

Now up the grand staircase. One paused on the upper landing to admire the portrait of Catherine Garniss Chase, a queenly figure. Who could wonder that Salmon Portland Chase cherished throughout life each slight memento of this exquisite young creature? Though permitting the portrait to hang as her father had left

it, Kate jealously guarded the secret of his first romance.<sup>4</sup> In the Chief Justice's bedroom was hanging a picture of the martyred President, and one observed too a certificate of membership in the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in whose faith Mr. Chase lived and died. Passing into the West Room, "Katie's Room," when she visited her father at Edgewood, one's eye was caught by a quaint portrait above the mantel, the picture of Eliza Smith Chase, Kate's mother, a fair, young face with girlish figure in gray satin.

Below, the auctioneer was featuring an imported Sevres tea-set. Going, going, gone! Outside the rain dripped drearily. A gloomy day for a sale.<sup>5</sup> Kate realized small returns from her revered father's possessions. Daily, more and more harassed by creditors and tax collectors, she appealed to her husband for an increase of income. He replied curtly: "Why don't you go to your Washington friends for help?" Never, so she then thought, would she humble herself to ask bounty—she had the Chase pride—but she could ask advice and friendly service. Among the men of influence in the 70's was Roscoe Conkling, who though without wealth was a powerful politician and an able lawyer. She turned to him.

In 1860, when Kate Chase first came to Washington, young Conkling was in the House of Representatives, a raw provincial from central New York, a massive giant without drawing-room polish. William Sprague,

<sup>4</sup> Upon the death of her father, Kate Chase prevented his authorized biographer, Robert Warden, from access to documents through the fear, as he maintains, of having the love story of his first marriage come out, and thus depreciating his love for the second wife, Kate's mother.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Bryant Johnston gives an account of the auction.

of the same age as the Utica man, already was Governor of Rhode Island, with the confidence of wealth, flattered and courted. In less than ten years, their relative positions were reversed. Conkling stood as leader of the Senate, Sprague only a nondescript member. Physically and intellectually they were opposites. Sprague, small of stature, swarthy of skin, with insignificant bearing and manifest lack of power: Conkling, an Herculean figure of six feet, three inches, sanguine complexion, eyes of bluish gray surmounted by auburn eyebrows, a towering presence with conscious superiority; moreover, a fluent speaker, compelling and irresistible when in debate—"the stage type of statesman but not to be burlesqued"—admired and hated by the men, worshipped by the gallery ladies, the recipient of their smiles and roses—"our Roscoe."

When Chief Justice Chase passed away, Senator Conkling was invited by President Grant to take the chair as head of the Supreme Court bench. Conkling declined the honor, with the characteristic reason that he could not bear the restrictions of the office and "would be forever gnawing at the chains"—the figure of a lion describes this powerful man. Though he did not accept the revered Chief's position, he did accept his place in the heart of the daughter. She no longer used caution in her behavior in order to avoid "dreadful things being said." *Duty* no longer was her watchword. This relationship between Kate Chase Sprague and Roscoe Conkling, by some called a beautiful friendship, by others, a grand passion, became a shining mark for shafts of envy and malice.

Senator Conkling, though a married man with a family, for some years had lived alone at the Capital, the



ROScoe CONKLING





ill health of his wife and the distaste of his daughter for Washington society being made the excuse for their absence. During the summer of '77 he took a hurried trip across the Atlantic for his health ostensibly, the real object, it was whispered, being a visit to Kate in Paris. He returned to start the New York senatorial campaign of that year, seeking to put his strongest friends into the Upper House, and thus establish support two years later for his own presidential nomination. Kate also was back in August of this year, and that dates a scandalous episode, at Canonchet, when she was "personally assaulted" by her husband, who entered her room at night in a state of intoxication, seized and dragged her to a window, and attempted to throw her out of it. This she later on testified to. At the time, rumor was rife of the Spragues' estrangement, and no denial was attempted by either of them.

This disgraceful incident ended all attempt on their part to live together and Kate returned to Edgewood, forsaking altogether her summer residence, Canonchet. Senator Conkling now posed as her legal champion in her financial difficulties; he brought suit against a delinquent tenant on her estate charged with non-payment of rent, whereupon, "the audacious tenant defies the beautiful Mrs. Sprague and the Senatorial Adonis" and puts in a counter-claim of \$250. due him for dairy products supplied the *Madame*. The case was decided in her favor but an "appeal was taken." Her attorney did her more valuable service when he undertook to free Edgewood from back taxes and interest thereon that had accumulated while Kate was in Europe. He accomplished this and more: through the skillful maneuvering of Conkling aided by his client, Congress passed an

Act remitting for all time, the taxes from Edgewood, penalties, *et cetera*, "in view of the distinguished services of Salmon P. Chase to his country." <sup>6</sup>

It was no secret that Conkling and his client saw much of each other. Her carriage, it was observed, often stood before his office-home, and he frequently called at Edgewood. The morning call was then in vogue. One old Washingtonian remembers the picture of Kate Chase Sprague gowned in pink silk robe, entertaining a group of her gentlemen admirers, while her maid dressed her coppery hair. On another day she was standing at the head of the mahogany staircase, "haranguing Roscoe Conkling about a Cabinet appointment." No longer the undisputed queen of Washington—her throne had been usurped by others—the pretty Mrs. Belknap as parlor star, and Mrs. Fish as leader of the Smart Set. Kate Chase Sprague now assumed a new rôle as High Priestess of Edgewood. Public men assembled around her to solicit her counsel. Her independent life in France had broken down her reserve in great part. She now defied public censure and adopted the freedom of manners of the Scandalous Seventies.

With Senator Conkling as escort, Mrs. Sprague appeared at dinners, receptions, and public amusements. One episode in which they figured furnished subject for gossip chat among the Senators and their wives for many a day. A dinner party was given to which both Mrs. Sprague and Mr. Conkling were invited. The Senator came early and inquired on entering if the lady had arrived. It was a stormy evening and she was late. When at last the doors were flung open for her en-

<sup>6</sup> Senator Conkling was instrumental in introducing as an amendment to the Sundry Appropriations Bill, during the winter of '78 and '79, a clause exempting the Chase estate from future taxation.

trance, with a courtly advance and a whispered word, he presented her with an immense bouquet of the rarest and costliest flowers. From that night on, gentlemen slyly talked together, and the ladies repeated with subtle smiles the story of the couple's devotion.

The habitual attendance of Kate Chase Sprague upon Senate proceedings—and *always* when Conkling was to speak—became the subject of much remark. From the gallery section set apart for Senators' wives, she looked about her with the air of an empress. Kate was the focus of attention in the gallery as Conkling was on the floor. He was then at the apex of his power and he spoke often, and at length, his flowery eloquence in full play. Not only did he aim his forensic saber against the Democratic members, but against his Republican colleagues as well. War was on between Conkling and Blaine, and each went full tilt against the other. The Lamar-Conkling set-to was said to have been the most violent ever witnessed in the Senate Chamber.

The dome of the Capitol shone steadily and proclaimed night session. Let a "lady reporter" describe the scene:

Feb. 23 (Sat) 1878.—The Silver bill passed the Senate 48 to 21. Senator Lamar antagonized the bill against wish of Mississippi—Friday all day gloomy, at night dreary rainfall. 8 P.M. barely standing room in galleries. Senator Hoar in the chair—Senator Jones, the Silver King, stood in center aisle. Senator Conkling sat, half lounging in a chair in front of the clerk's desk, holding a book in his hand. One could not tell whether he was conning it or looking up at the gallery where sat Mrs. Kate Chase Sprague. She wore a black robe with threads of gold in delicate tracery, a bonnet of black lace crowned with a double tiara of roses, creamy pink alternating with purplish red. A fair picture. What was passing in her mind? She looked about her with the mien of an empress but her face was the face of a Sphinx. We turn to the

face of the New York Senator. The book did not look to be of a monetary character, and his brows were not knit. . . .

The debate opened on the Mississippi River improvement. Conkling got the floor and denounced the bill as a juggle, accusing the Democrats of bad faith in taking it up in the early part of the day. Lamar who had introduced the bill, jumped up excitedly, saying that if he himself was meant, Conkling was guilty of a falsehood, the contempt for which only equalled that held for its author.

The Senate was at attention in a second. The ladies in the gallery leaned forward and looked towards Conkling to note his reaction. He walked deliberately from the rear of the Chamber and stood a few feet from Lamar, while he addressed the Chair in measured tones, saying that if they were not in the Senate he would pronounce the member from Mississippi a blackguard, a coward, and a liar. Lamar attempted to ask if he had been charged guilty of bad faith, to which Conkling replied that he would not at that time hold any communication with him:

If I caught his words aright, I have only to say, this not being the place to measure with any man the capacity to violate decency, to violate the rules of the Senate, or to commit any of the improprieties of life, . . . should the member from Mississippi, except in the presence of the Senate, charge me by intention or otherwise, with falsehood, I would denounce him as blackguard, as a coward and a liar.<sup>7</sup>

Applause and hisses from the floor, screams from the gallery. Senator Cameron, who was sitting with his wife and Mrs. Sprague, went down stairs two steps at a time to reach the scene of encounter. The Chair de-

<sup>7</sup> Congressional Record.

manded quiet in the galleries. It was 2:25 P.M. Another call of the Senate was ordered.

The Lamar-Conkling tourney was the talk of the town. Stories were set afloat that Conkling would attempt personal violence against Lamar, for whom considerable sympathy was roused. Conkling's enemies declared that he never had many personal friends on either side of the Chamber; that since his daughter's wedding which he would not attend, it was generally understood that his domestic troubles had increased his ill-humor and his habit of making insulting remarks *sotto voce*. Others declared that the presence of Kate Chase Sprague stimulated his excessive arrogance, the "monomania of his own importance," as President Hayes put it. Which reminds one that this gentleman owed his presidency to Senator Conkling, if the history of the Hayes-Tilden contest has not been wrongly written.

On March 3, 1878, the Electoral Commission settled the disputed title in favor of the Republican returns. In the approval vote of the Senate, Conkling's support was needed to turn the scale, it being known that he believed Tilden had the majority. When at the crucial moment Conkling did not appear, the anti-Tilden men gave the majority vote to the Republican, and Tilden thereby lost the Presidency. Senator Conkling at this time was the dearest friend of Kate Chase Sprague and it was suggested and believed that she restrained him from supporting Tilden.<sup>8</sup>

Certainly, at this time, during the spring of 1878, the friendship between Conkling and Kate Sprague was

<sup>8</sup> Alexander K. McClure, *Our Presidents and How We Make Them*, pp. 268-69.

in full flower, and so continued for another year and more. Throughout the extra session in the spring of '79, Senate spectators found much diversion in watching the public-defying behavior of the two, with exchange of notes and glances, symbols of mutual infatuation. Reporters injected much spicy condiment to their stale write-ups of Senate doings. One referred to the Senator's "reckless conduct" in his acquaintance with "the well-known Washington lady;" another recalled the lover's "ostrich-like maneuvers" one afternoon during this session when a colored messenger appeared in the gallery and took a note from Mrs. Sprague, and simultaneously, Senator Conkling rose, went to the doors, faced about, and stood with hands clasped behind him. The doors opened slightly and a dusky hand delivered the note to the Senator, who hastened back to his desk and opened the envelope.

During this session, Senator Conkling made a long speech in debate, and to protect her from the enormous crowd, the Senator's private secretary retained a seat for Mrs. Sprague and sat beside her. When Conkling finished, he was surrounded by a throng of eager associates. Mrs. Sprague hastily wrote a card and sent it down by the Secretary. Conkling turned away from the half-dozen Senators, who stood with outstretched hands to congratulate him upon his speech, and read the note, and a deep flush of pleasure passed over his face. He put the card in his pocket and glanced gratefully towards the lady—"an open acknowledgment of a union of hearts"—this, though one of the "sensations of an interesting afternoon," was no exceptional occurrence.

With something of satanic satisfaction the soft buzzing slander was kept up, in the effort to involve the

character of Roscoe Conkling and Kate Chase Sprague, both alike too disdainfully proud to defend themselves. Above the incessant chatter an occasional voice rose in denial of the charges against them. One woman journalist<sup>9</sup> who gave slight regard to hearsay evidence, interpreted the slander as having for its mainspring the bitter political animus of the "bloodhounds" on the scent of Conkling:

It is declared that Mrs. Sprague went into Conkling's office alone. She went in on business but gossips say she went in to make love to Conkling. They say she nearly fainted the day of the Lamar-Conkling episode. The day Benton attacked Foote, one-fourth of the ladies showed alarm. They say Kate Chase rose, leaned over the gallery with blanched face— . . . that she is singled out among others . . . shows the deadly malice, jealousy and hatred of 'petticoated brigadiers' in Washington society. 'Tis said Kate Chase sends notes to Conkling . . . a common thing for ladies to send notes to members on the floor, common also are smiles of approval exchanged. . . .

A second woman writer made a similar line of argument in defense of Mrs. Sprague accused of indulging in unbecoming behavior while attending the Senate sessions:

Year after year, this accomplished woman sat in the gallery, apparently deeply interested in the debates, without the slightest departure from the most rigid decorum. In late years, she was rarely seen without one or more of her children. History is full of martyred women who have been used to crush obnoxious men. Conkling had enemies who wished to crush him. They used slander to bring him into disrepute with his constituents and destroy his hope of the presidency.

Some months later, Kate Chase Sprague took occasion to acknowledge the public defense of her character

<sup>9</sup> Jane Gray Swisshelm.

which the Washington women correspondents made for her, by inviting them to Edgewood to an elaborately appointed luncheon.

High noon. The heavy doors are opened displaying an elegant table in the center of a perfect dining room, recalling thoughts of the royal days of sunny France; ancient Gobelin tapestry once in the palace of Marie Antoinette. Persian rugs conceal the inlaid floor. A Parisian clock measures the hours in musical chimes. . . . Ornate screens and exquisite paintings adorn the room. An elaborate service of silver and gold upon the sideboard; upon the table, Irish damask soft and sheeny as satin, around which are placed eight heavy mahogany chairs. All are seated, the hostess leading the way and taking her stand at the head of the table, while her ebony assistant stands at her right, a white-gloved, machine-like Ethiopian who understands a glance from the Princess' eye. The courses follow in silent succession.

French bouillon in bowls, gems brought from the heart of Persia, made from the dust of garnets from the Palace of the Shah—that had found their way into the Chase home; oyster patties served on plates, each a handsome hand-painted portrait by a French artist—one a head of Lafayette, another of Napoleon I—which Mrs. Sprague had secured from a sale of royal pottery belonging to a reigning family of the old world; sweetbreads on plates designed by Kate Chase as a present to the Chief Justice, made at a celebrated pottery near Paris, no two alike, and each embellished by a gorgeous bouquet: one, with the violet and gentian of New England, reminiscent of the father who loved these native blooms, drew a tender shadow over the daughter's eyes. . . .<sup>10</sup>

Before the spring of 1880, Kate Chase Sprague suffered from scandal a thousandfold worse than the Senate gallery chit-chat gossip. The drama was culminating to its climax.

<sup>10</sup> *Olivia Letters*, April 15, 1880.



## XX

### DISRUPTION

WHAT were Senator Sprague's comments on this ardent romance between his wife and the New York Senator? For of course his Washington friends were not slow in baiting his jealousy with these malicious reports. One news sheet quotes him as saying that the "duello" should be brought back into use—the occasion being most appropriate. The two gentlemen at this time did not cross swords, but some months later they came to close quarters. In late summer the triangle melodrama was released and broadcast over the country by the daily press.

The setting for the piece was Canonchet. Besides the three principal characters involved in the plot, there were a large group of supernumeraries, servants and village folk of Narragansett Pier. This in brief is the story.

Prologue.—As the hot season approached, Mrs. Sprague at the suggestion of her husband obtained permission of the Trustee of the estate to return to Canonchet for a few months. Before leaving Edgewood, she had engaged a tutor, Professor George Linck of New York, to take charge of her son's education for the season at a salary of \$50 per month—this without the consent of the father. Willie and his teacher arrived at

Canonchet one early morning in July, in advance of Mrs. Sprague.

Professor Linck received cold welcome from the master of the house, who shortly ordered the tutor off the place at the point of a pistol. This unexpected treatment of the poor German, Governor Sprague later declared was a protest against the mother's educational regimen. She had kept her son so constantly immured in the schoolroom, first in Germany and more recently in an academy near Washington, that the boy had become an invalid. The father now proposed, he said, to let Willie do what he pleased, ride, row, swim, and sail. This direct challenge to the mother's will furnished the introductory scene to the tragi-comedy to follow.

Act One. Shortly after Mrs. Sprague and her children, with a number of guests, were settled at Canonchet for the season, Senator Sprague announced that he was about to leave home on business which would keep him away for about a week. It is presumed that he knew Roscoe Conkling was then at Newport and would be happy to accept an invitation to Canonchet, which he did. Sprague's sudden return resulted in a stormy encounter with Conkling, who for once was at a disadvantage. The precipitous departure of the Senator, and the escape of Kate and her little girls followed in dramatic succession.

Act Two.—Three days after the grand dénouement, Mrs. Sprague returned to the home of friends in the vicinity of Canonchet. She was accompanied by her lawyer, who went to the house to secure clothing for Kate and her children, but was refused admittance by her husband. Learning where his wife was, he decided to interview her. A violent scene followed, crimination

countered by recrimination. Sprague demanded the return of the three little girls, declaring that their mother was not a proper woman to bring them up. He accused her of poisoning their minds against him and alienating the affection of the boy through the medium of the German tutor. Finally, he said: "Do you intend to return to Canonchet?" And she responded, "I fear for my life if I do." To which he replied, "I never harmed anyone, and you are safe." He then reverted to his demand for the custody of the children. After consulting her lawyer, Mrs. Sprague decided to surrender them temporarily to the father, knowing that the law gave him first claim upon them. Sprague then packed them in his carriage and started for his home. It was now evening. After their departure, the mother, greatly agitated, followed them to Canonchet. Another stormy scene ensued. At last, the house was closed and darkened.

The next day all cards were refused at the door, and all visitors with one exception were turned away. The report was circulated that Mrs. Sprague was under lock and key, and that only with the greatest difficulty could anyone communicate with her. Nevertheless, a newspaper correspondent from Boston, at Mrs. Sprague's invitation, succeeded in gaining access to her. She wished to give out to the public her version of the story. The reporter was conducted up the carved staircase to the second floor, where a broad doorway opened into an elegant apartment. Kate Chase Sprague occupied an arm chair near the table. She rose to receive her guest. "She is extremely pale, but her manner betrays only a slight trace of agitation. Once or twice her lips tremble but in the main she preserves a most admirable

self-control, speaking calmly but earnestly, and with a degree of native eloquence and grace suited to make a powerful impression on the most obdurate.”<sup>1</sup> Kate began:

I have sent for you because I wish to correct some false impressions which have gone abroad. . . . I have my story to tell and when the truth of this terrible business is known, I know that I shall be justified. God knows I have no reason to fear the truth, though for thirteen long years my life has been a constant burden and drag upon me. For years I have striven to stand between my husband's wrong doing and the public. I have done it for the sake of my children, and not for any affection that existed between us, for there has been none for years. . . .

At this point, the reporter injected a question: “How did Mr. Conkling venture to come to Canonchet, under the circumstances?”

He came simply to use his influence with my husband to consent to a certain policy in his management of the estate. I wrote to Mr. Conkling to come for that purpose and he replied that he would be of little service but he was willing to try if I wished it. He came and occupied a room on the third floor for two nights preceding the trouble. On Friday morning when I came down to breakfast I was told that Mr. Sprague had come home suddenly at three o'clock in the morning, and had left again. I paid no attention to this, however, as his movements are always very erratic. He comes in on you like a ghost in the night and hurries away again in the same disquieting manner. I thought no more of it, and busied myself about household affairs, while Senator Conkling took a seat on the lounge in the room and was looking at the newspapers. After giving my orders, I turned to poor Mr. Martin, a guest, who was sitting in the room and at his request, sat down to read a little to him. Just then Mr. Sprague came up the staircase. He walked slowly into the room, Mr. Conkling rising to meet him. Some words passed which I did not hear but the tone of which arrested my attention. I rose to my feet. Mr. Conkling

<sup>1</sup> *New York Sun*, August 17, 1879.

walked straight across the room to where I stood and said, 'Mrs. Sprague, your husband is very much excited.' I told him not to mind me, but that if Mr. Sprague was in a passion it would be useless to argue with him and might only lead to violence. . . . Then Mr. Conkling walked down stairs and out on the platform. My oldest daughter, Ethel, followed him and put her arm around him and said 'Don't go, Mr. Conkling.' Mr. Sprague stood about fifty feet off, on the edge of the piazza eyeing us in a desperate sort of way. I said, 'No, Ethel; Mr. Conkling will go, but no one shall hurt either him or us.' My husband all this time kept perfect silence. As to what happened later when he followed Mr. Conkling, I do not know. I know he took his gun in the buggy and I know it was loaded, for Willie, my boy, came to me afterwards and said, 'Mama, Papa's gun is loaded with three slugs and if he shoots anyone, he'll kill them sure.' Then he told me his father had asked him for some caps but that he didn't think it best to give them to his father. I have reason to be grateful that no one was murdered.

The wife had testified in her own defense. Sprague, on the advice of his lawyer, refused at the time to give interviews concerning the affair. Conkling was mute throughout, and he succeeded in silencing nearly all of the metropolitan papers. His effort, later, to gain a pledge of silence from Sprague met with ironic negation. This word was sent back to the Senator: "Governor Sprague will not leave the scandal of Washington to be repeated in his own household."

For days following the sensational scene at Canonchet, resorters and villagers at Narragansett were kept at high tension by the romantic flight of Kate Chase Sprague and her young daughters from Canonchet, a thrilling ending to the emotional drama. The action has now reached the Last Act. Kate Chase Sprague, held a virtual prisoner in her castle, Canonchet, with its

ninety-two rooms, and in fear for her life, with the aid of her lawyers made her plans to escape.

On the last day of August, at 5:30 P.M., she rushed her little girls and their nurse down the back stairway and into a carryall which had been driven to the rear of the house. She herself stepped into a carriage near by, and the party were driven away. Sprague had become suspicious that escape was contemplated, and did not, as his custom was, go down to the Beach. He remained at the front of the house dozing. So quiet was the exit, however, that he was not cognizant of the flight of his wife until a workman on the estate came up to him with the greeting, "So Mrs. Sprague is gone." This was sufficient to waken him thoroughly.

A mad pursuit followed, first to the Pier station, then to Kingston Junction, the latter on the supposition the fugitives might have been picked up at an out-of-the-way stop. The train did not hold the party. The excited man drove his foam-lathered horse back to Canonchet, not a whit wiser as to his family's whereabouts, but vowing to take legal steps to get possession of his daughters. "The children are mine wherever I can lay my hands on them. . . . I had no desire to compel Mrs. Sprague to remain. She might do as she pleased."

During the hour while her husband was driving at a mad rate to overtake the train, at an equally rapid pace she was being taken in an opposite direction towards the Bay. Often she glanced fearfully behind to see if she were being pursued. Arrived at Wickford, she took supper with friends, then with a fresh relay of horses hurried on to Chapins, where a yacht was awaiting her arrival. She and her party boarded the boat and steamed away in the direction of Boston, so it was

reported. But nothing positive was known. The newspapers for a fortnight and more could do nothing but "conjecture" the movements of Kate Chase Sprague. Three weeks later, after her arrival at Edgewood, she gave out a second interview to a newspaper representative.<sup>2</sup> She told him that she had no intention of going to Europe, as had been rumored. She would remain with her children in her father's old home.

They are safe here. My attendants are devoted and will let no harm come to me. Here I can be quiet and wait for my wrongs to be righted. I have been maligned . . . made the target at which everybody could fire. To be so misrepresented, so misunderstood has given me my greatest pain. I have been charged with misdoings of which I am innocent. I have been credited with being at the Capitol nearly every day of the last session. I do not believe that in the six years since my father's death, I have been in the Senate or House that number of times. Every act of mine that could be used against me has been enlarged upon by my enemies.

And what was the logical sequence of the cataclysm in the Sprague house following the scandal? On December 18, 1880, counsel for Kate Chase Sprague filed a petition for divorce. A cross suit was entered at once by William Sprague, charging his wife with infidelity. After two years of haggling, the final settlement was arranged, through the assistance of Judge Hoadley of Cincinnati, who came East purposely to aid the daughter of Salmon P. Chase. The terms of the agreement were signed: Mr. Sprague to withdraw wholly his cross-bill, Mrs. Sprague to withdraw the more heinous charges against him, and have the decree of divorce read on the ground of desertion and nonsupport. The three daughters were to remain with the mother; the

<sup>2</sup> *Washington Post*, Sept. 20, 1879.

son with the father. Alimony was not made a part of the decree, but the subject of after consideration, depending on the settlement of the Sprague estate. Kate Chase was given the right to use her maiden name, a privilege her friends never had given up during her married life. It was her professional title, the name with which she had gained fame.

The country had been highly entertained by this drama from high life. For the principal characters in the piece the effect of the scandal was damaging to each one: Senator Sprague's offensive conduct helped to destroy all save a vestige of respect for him; Roscoe Conkling became the object of calumny prejudicial to his political aspirations, and at least one cause of defeating his candidacy for the presidency; Kate Chase came out of the ordeal with her queenly robes smirched. Thereafter, sobered and chastened, she sought the shadows of obscurity. When she appeared at the Capitol, she made no attempt to attract attention, either by her manner or her toilet; she went to observe the intellectual combats, and sustained a dignified mien. One of the last appearances of Kate Chase and Roscoe Conkling in the Senate Chamber is recorded. The diplomatic gallery was crowded. Prominent among the ladies present were Mrs. Blaine and Mrs. Chase, accompanied by her young daughters. Senator Conkling, in mixed brown business suit, a bit of red handkerchief showing above the breast pocket, sat next the middle aisle. Still the focus of attention, the adoration of the ladies. "Beginning with the pages, all unite in worship of Senator Conkling." He still was the recipient of boxes of roses, wrote notes of thanks, and sent smiles to the fair ladies who thus complimented him. But no glances



or words were exchanged between Our Roscoe and Kate Chase. All mementoes had long since been returned.<sup>3</sup>

Since that August day in 1879, their friendship had been blasted. Doubtless she was outraged by his self-protective silence before the public, his apparent lack of loyalty in failing to speak in her defense. Though in private to a few personal friends he expressed his sorrow over the whole scurrilous business,<sup>4</sup> she could not but believe that his first thought was for his own reputation. Her disillusionment was complete. They had paid dearly for their romance—whether a grand passion or a beautiful friendship, who can say? They loved, as was but natural for two so perfectly matched beings both in body, mind and temperament. How different might have been their lives, had they met and wooed and loved when young.

With the disruption of their relationship, each of their suns gradually dropped towards the horizon. Conkling, shortly after President Garfield was inaugurated, became disaffected because the administration refused to accept his dictation of patronage—it was rule or ruin with him. He resigned his Senate seat, retired to private life and opened a law office in New York, to recoup his fortunes. He was an embittered man, a lion suffering from loss of power, which he attributed to the villifications of his character by the Press. "A thief breaks into your house, steals your watch and goes to Sing Sing. The newspaper man breaks into the casket

<sup>3</sup> While Mrs. Chase was living in Europe, Conkling sent a "package" to Edgewood. One can only guess what the contents were.

<sup>4</sup> Roscoe Conkling to Senator Jones, Sept. 18, 1879: "Hideous calumnies have of course distressed me greatly, not for my own sake chiefly, however as you will readily believe—no falsehoods or assaults affecting me alone could have given a tithe of the pain. I refer to this, because when writing to *you*, it would be strange & unnatural not to be frank."

which contains your most precious treasure, your reputation, and goes unscathed before the law.”<sup>5</sup> Roscoe Conkling, victim of the great snowstorm of March, 1888, passed off the field of action.

Kate Chase too felt the sting of contumely and retired into the shadow of the side scenes, and the tone of Washington assemblies correspondingly dropped. Stately but dull receptions of the Eighties, one Senator stamped with disfavor with the terse dictum, “I hate them. There is nothing there but clothes.” Kate Chase had no worthy successor, as she had had no predecessor—and Society in a blundering way managed to get along without an acknowledged head. Nevertheless, the High Priestess of Edgewood still exercised her magnetic power. She still continued to command the admiration of prominent men, who made her their Aspasia. One of the political secrets of the day was that the anti-Blaine campaign was first planned in the parlor at Edgewood on the famous davenport, where statesmen were wont to recline while discussing politics with their oracle. Another story goes that the solemn reformer, Carl Schurz, thought enough of the lady’s intellectual acumen to drive out to Edgewood and read to her the first draft of the Civil Service Bill. He had not read long, when she laughed outright.

“What is the matter?” he asked with a terrific frown.

“Why,” she replied, “this will never work—not in this country.”

In 1884, when Chester A. Arthur had ambition to gain the presidential nomination, he often drove out to Edgewood in his elegant carriage, to consult with her.

<sup>5</sup> *Life and Letters of Roscoe Conkling*, by A. R. Conkling.

## XXI

### SHADOW SILHOUETTES

**K**ATE CHASE picked up the broken strands of her life and started weaving a new pattern. No brilliant colors, no gold and silver threads were to illumine the drab black of her wall tapestry. She now appeared before the world as a tragic queen. Exiled and poor she was soon neglected if not forgotten. She desired only to slip into the background of the society that she once ruled. Her chief interest now was her daughters. Coincident with the divorce, she gathered her meagre resources together, and started for foreign shores to complete their education. In this she was to have, as it proved, no assistance from their father.

Madame Chase—as she was known abroad—chose a little villa on the edge of the Forest of Fontainebleau, where she lived the simple life—as simple as Kate Chase could force herself to live. Ethel became her mother's first thought. She attended the fashionable school of Mademoiselle Dussant, whose patron was the Roumanian poet-queen, Carmen Sylva. Portia, a bright active child resembling her father in feature and complexion, was put under a governess. Kitty, a sweet, pretty little thing who resembled her mother in looks, remained a child in mind, a subnormal, the victim of the domestic tragedy, as Kate believed. None of the Sprague children had the predominant Chase characteristics, physical or intellectual.

Nevertheless, she was ambitious to give them advantages for culture. In their education, she stressed the acquirement of languages and as at this time the Germanophile movement was at its height, she took Ethel to Leipzig and Berlin for a year's study, where the young girl acquired a good speaking and writing knowledge of the language, to be useful to her in after years.<sup>1</sup> Mother and daughter also travelled to England. While in London Kate Chase took Ethel to see Ellen Terry in a Shakespearean rôle. They went backstage and met the great actress, who at the moment was full of thoughts of her coming first tour of the United States. Miss Terry anxiously asked Madame Chase, "Do you think the Americans will like my acting? Will they like my costumes?" This unforgettable incident in the young Ethel's life bent her mind towards the theatrical profession, which she later was to choose under her mother's encouragement. Kate Chase ever since her Columbus days had been devoted to histrionics, and secretly yearned for the footlights. On rare occasions when she had appeared in private performances, her native art showed what a great actress she might have made. Once she took the part of Mary Queen of Scots.

But all the past ambition and glory were passed; she was now living in the prosaic present; she never spoke of her former husband and but rarely of her days dead and gone. Sometimes, however, American tourists found her out in her retreat, and Europeans whom she had graciously entertained in Washington, in years past, paid their respects.

During the autumn of 1886, Kate Chase was called

<sup>1</sup> During the World War, Ethel Chase Donaldson read "bushels" of foreign correspondence.

back to her homeland on a solemn mission. Ohio friends of Salmon P. Chase and his one-time law clerks now risen to eminence claimed the remains of one they had esteemed when he was an obscure young lawyer. Kate Chase crossed the Atlantic to attend the ceremonies incident to the removal of the casket from Oakhill in Washington to Spring Grove in Cincinnati. One who saw her, that October evening, as she made her way down the cemetery path to the gateway, a solitary mourner garbed in black, prefigured the scene as symbolic of her own life.

The "small funeral cortege . . . passed over the brow of the hill . . . out of the sunlight into the shadow . . . it seemed the counterpart of her own life. Her star did not set in a cloudless sky; no golden sunset no roseate hues; she walked through the shadows of humiliation which came of shattered hopes and bitter experiences." <sup>2</sup> . . .

On a special train provided by the Government, the daughter accompanied the remains west to her native city. She listened to the eulogies pronounced in honor of the great Chief Justice.<sup>3</sup> She saw his last resting place under a spreading elm in the beautiful God's Acre. She took mournful consolation in these sad rites. She knew that before many years she herself would be laid beside the father whose memory she venerated.

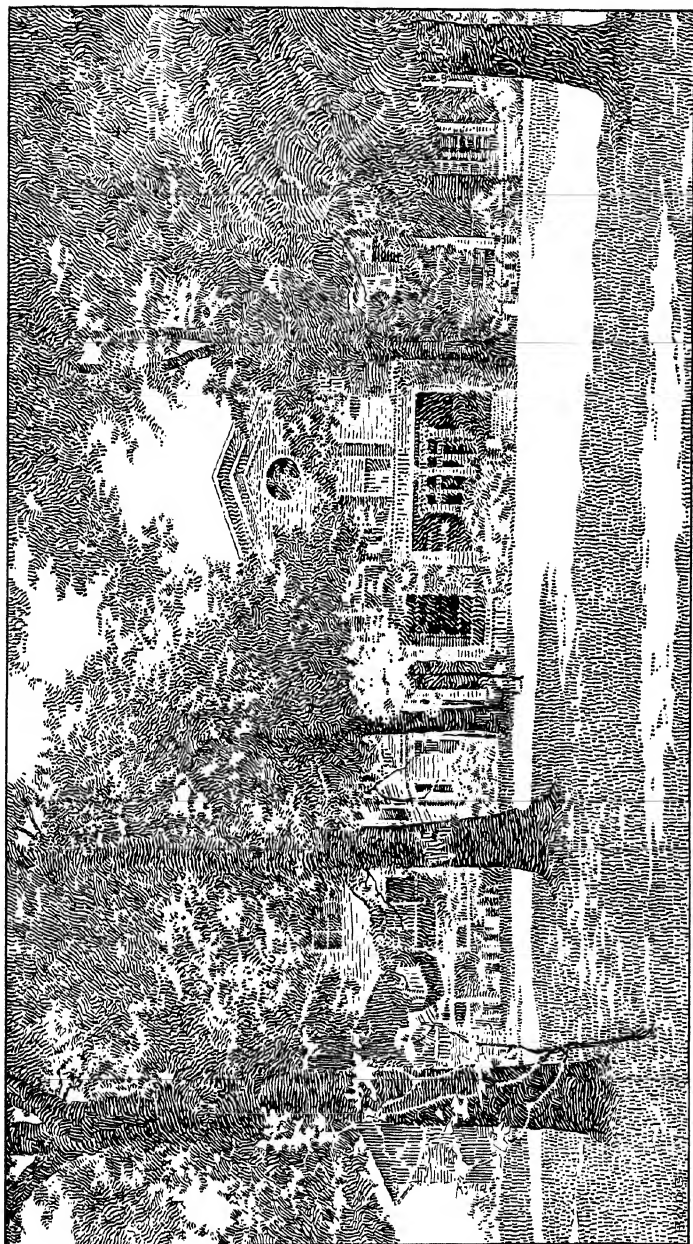
Before returning to Washington, Kate Chase visited Columbus, where, thirty years before as a young miss,

<sup>2</sup> Mary Smith Lockwood, *Historic Homes in Washington*.

<sup>3</sup> Governor George F. Hoadley gave the address of the day. He reviewed the life of S. P. Chase, a man who without means or influence worked his way up. He referred to the great man's self-control in bearing obloquy and sorrow, of his generosity in giving free legal service in defense of his friends, and in protection of fugitive slaves. "He was a walking arsenal of the law of liberty."

she had shocked the church ladies by the freedom of her speech and behavior. Since then she had consistently defied the conventions and outraged public opinion; and now it was fitting and proper that she pay penance by being denied social recognition. So at least decided Mrs. Lucy Webb Hayes when she heard that the Governor's wife was planning to entertain the disgraced, the divorced Kate Chase. Mrs. Foraker, however, was not inclined to proscribe utterly the accused lady; on the contrary, to laud her in glowing terms—"a woman of extraordinary fascination, beauty and distinction . . . cultivated to her finger tips . . . the manners that come from exquisite breeding and a charming heart." Moreover, Julia Bundy Foraker had known Catherine Chase from girlhood; their fathers had been friends; Governor Foraker held the memory of the Chief Justice in high reverence. Ohio was doing its best to honor the memory of the illustrious statesman; the Governor's wife could not but show courtesy to the daughter, "so celebrated and lovely a woman," whose prospective visit was causing such a flutter of excited anticipation. Mrs. Hayes was dismayed. Chancing to meet Mrs. Foraker at a friend's home, a few days before Kate's arrival, she drew aside the young wife of the Governor and with sanctimonious countenance began in semi-whisper: "My dear, I hear you are to entertain the notorious Mrs. X. Why should it be you? We must not judge her—let the Lord do that—but I think—in your position—to countenance even the appearance is a mistake." "She drifted away with a faint rustle of silk a faint fragrance of tea rose. We did not speak of it again." <sup>4</sup> Evidently, the Governor's wife, though

<sup>4</sup>*I Would Live It Again*, Mrs. Joseph Benson Foraker.



EDGEWOOD





young, was quite capable of forming her own judgments on social proprieties.

Kate Chase returned to Edgewood, her father's former home, where his spirit seemed to linger to give her what in life he gave her, faith and hope. Whatsoever comfort there was in this abode for her, to others the century-old mansion with immense hallways and high ceilings and its multitude of chambers, gave little suggestion of comfort for a lonely woman. The furnishings, once of royal magnificence, now presented the depressive incongruity of poverty succeeding wealth. The Florentine couch carved in cupids and upholstered in faded plush was there to remind her of former glory and the lost fortune she spent upon it. Here, too, she might catch the reflection of her grief-stained eyes in the Venetian mirror. But how tawdry and cheap everything now looked—pictures and books outmoded and dilapidated!

She looked out of the library window towards the Capitol. No longer was she a part of that life; few of her old friends were there. The gallant, courteous Arthur was dying in New York, a broken-hearted man. Kate Chase took only a passing interest in the doings of Washington. The new President's bride, the handsome Frances Folsom Cleveland, was now the center of public admiration. Kate Chase was all but forgotten. She must now give her attention to the piecing out of a daily living for herself and her children. She still was not without civic pride, however, for she instigated legislation against saloons in the suburbs of Washington and was successful in the reform.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> "It was Kate Chase's Victory" (Washington letter to the *Chicago Herald*, March 10, 1891).

After a year's dramatic training in New York, Ethel Chase was selected by Richard Mansfield as his character actress. She remained with him several seasons, then married a struggling physician. The match was a disappointment to her mother, who had anticipated fame and fortune for her daughter. But this was nothing to the agony and shame she suffered because of the fate of her first-born, her Willie. At the final breaking up of the Sprague family in 1882, William Sprague junior had elected to stay with his father, who exercised a strong though unwholesome influence over the youth. Trained from childhood to obey a parent, who alternately indulged and terrorized the boy, he could not easily slip from under this baleful domination as he approached manhood.

Let us sketch briefly the history of Canonchet. Sprague, threatened with its sale under the hammer, turned the castle into an arsenal, guarding it by a squad of his former employees, who patrolled from the roof and grounds.<sup>6</sup> When the auctioneer, the trustee, and the prospective buyer approached the place they were opposed. The fighting Governor commanded his seventeen-year-old son to order the intruders off the ground. Willie dashed down on his pony. Just as one man was about to mount the wall, he cried out, "I have orders not to let any person enter these grounds." Shots were fired and the company at the gate dispersed. How Sprague and his son held Canonchet makes an exciting story. Once when the father went to Providence for the day, he left Willie with the word, "Don't let anyone in." And so literally did the boy obey, that not the caretaker himself when he appeared was allowed to

<sup>6</sup> Appendix: *Storming Canonchet*.

enter. The boy was not an individual, but a pawn that his father moved at will. For ten years the only business of this land baron and his lieutenant was to hold Castle Canonchet and drive off agents of the law who sought to secure possession of the place.

While Kate Chase was in Europe living her simple, uneventful life at the little villa in Fontainebleau, sensational events were happening at Narragansett Pier. Soon after the divorce decree was granted, Governor Sprague remarried. His second wife, it was remarked, was in all points his equal—gay, superficial and clever. The history of the Weed sisters presented a spicy story for press correspondents, "fiction appearing insipid by comparison." How the two young girls from the West Virginia mountain region, extremely poor but "wonderfully beautiful," had left their home village to go out into the world and capitalize their wit and beauty; how the husband of Inez, one of the sisters, died forsaken by his wife, in the old Walnut Street Hotel, in Cincinnati; how the widow came East and married Senator Sprague; all in all forms a modern jazz comedy plot rich in intrigue.

Shortly after the Senator and his bride were married, her sister, Avis Weed, aged seventeen, a striking brunette, came to live with her. The young girl had not long been a resident at Canonchet when it was announced that "young Willie" and Avis had been married, at Little Rest, on Kingston Hill. Within a few months a child was born and named Inez Sprague. This hasty union embittered the youth of nineteen, who felt that he had been made a scapegoat for the sin of his father. He was driven from the home, into a world for which he was utterly unfitted to make his way; and so

far dropped in caste as to take a job as conductor on a railroad. Later he was persuaded to journey across the continent to accept a promised position in a newspaper office, only to find that no such opening existed. Stranded and alone in a strange city, he became desperate. After writing a pitiful note expressive of bewilderment over his father's abandonment, and sorrow that he had "treated me so," he picked up his pistol and took his own life. The day was October 2nd, 1890. William Sprague junior had lived but twenty-five years. So was ended the brief span of days given to Salmon Portland Chase's grandson and Kate Chase's first-born and only son, who had been ushered into such princely surroundings and on whom such great hopes were centered.

Poor Kate! Against the father's influence, she had clung to the ambition that Willie should have a higher education. She had endeavored to make of her son a professional gentleman. Once, after the Sprague failure, in conversation with her sister, Mrs. Hoyt, Kate remarked, "I intend Willie to be an architect." "But does not that require a long training?" Nettie replied. "I supposed you would wish him to go into something more immediately lucrative." To which Kate countered "with fine scorn," "Did Michael Angelo think of that?" As it developed, neither a fine arts training nor a trade was given to Willie Sprague.

His death caused scarcely more than a ripple of horror in the world outside. So completely had he been shut off from his natural blood relations, that his cousin, young Hoyt<sup>7</sup> who was at the time in a boys' prepara-

<sup>7</sup> Franklin C. Hoyt.

tory school, made no mental note of Willie's suicide. He was accosted by a classmate thus:

"I see you are not wearing black today."

"No, why should I wear black?"

"Because your cousin is dead."

"My cousin! who do you mean?"

"William Sprague junior. He committed suicide yesterday. He was a grandson of Chief Justice Chase. You are also a grandson. So you must be cousins."

Plans were made for services at St. Peters-by-the-Sea, to be followed by interment in the Sprague mausoleum at Swan Point Cemetery near Providence.<sup>8</sup> Mrs. Chase received the terrible news and prepared to attend the funeral. She sent her daughter Ethel to precede her and arrange for her presence, since the mother did not wish to look upon her former husband nor his family; when Sprague was told of Kate's wish, he said, "It shall be as she desires." Robed in heavy crêpe she came into the little church, where Willie twenty-five years before had been christened, and took her place at the head of the casket. After the brief reading of the service, Kate Chase passed out of the church without looking upon the Sprague group in another aisle of the transept. She bore herself with noble carriage though the proud head was bowed. Friends and old neighbors gave her their mute condolence.

Though Kate Chase would not look upon the Spragues, she learned through hearsay during the coming days of their doings; of how Canonchet was being presided over by her successors, the gay, moronesque

<sup>8</sup> The Sprague Tomb occupies a center position in the cemetery on a rise of ground, the colonnade of gray granite accentuated in height by low steps leading to the upper terrace. The single name *Sprague* is carved above the east entrance.

Weed sisters; of how Willie's widow was giving herself up to seeking profitable alliances with New York financiers, one of whom she attached to herself and persuaded to invest his wealth in the mortgaged Sprague estate; and how she, as "Mrs. Wheaton," became virtual owner of Canonchet, thus giving her elder sister and Senator Sprague a home free and clear. Kate Chase heard also of the redecoration of her former summer home in modern rococo style, colorful and flashy designs suiting the taste of the present occupants, and of how the second Mrs. Sprague herself directed the painting of the frescoes. *Venus from the Bath* appeared in Mrs. Sprague's boudoir. The music room was done in symbolic pictures. Here Canonchet's hostess gave musicales and herself rendered vocal programs. One gentleman in her audience afterwards ungallantly remarked of her art, "She shrieked like a peacock, but she thought she could sing." The entertainment given guests at Canonchet during the '90's had dropped in tone from that of the days of Kate Chase Sprague. The jazz age had opened and the intellectual was passing.

And Kate's three daughters, Ethel, Portia and Kitty, the innocent victims of cruel circumstance, what of them? They along with their mother suffered much because of the shattering of their affectional life-tendrils, when all too young to adjust themselves to fresh rooting in strange soil. The youngest of the three, Kitty, with a tubercular tendency that called for the tenderest care, remained the baby of the family, the pet and darling of the mother. Necessity forced the two older girls to economic independence, and to their credit, be it said, both achieved success in their ability to care

for themselves. The stamina of Ethel Chase Donaldson was brought out saliently during the Spanish-American War, in which Dr. Donaldson served as surgeon in the corps of the Rough Riders.

When Colonel Roosevelt and his company came north to recuperate, a telegram from Newport News informed Mrs. Donaldson of her husband's arrival, and she went to the depot in Washington expecting to take him out to Edgewood for his convalescence, but he gamely refused to leave his beloved leader and the other "boys." Mrs. Donaldson's description of the meeting of herself and Dr. Donaldson as related by herself is picturesque:

The men detrained. They were unkempt and ill-looking, very different in appearance from that which they had presented on going into the war. I looked eagerly among them to find my husband but could not. I actually walked about him three or four times without recognizing him, he was so changed. His dress was most odd. His uniform had been destroyed and in its place a curious combination of articles of clothing had been picked up here and there: an old knickerbocker suit, with an old coat, women's stockings, and a demoralized khaki hat, the crown out for the sake of ventilation. At last, he recognized me and fell into my arms.

When I saw that he was determined not to remain behind I made up my mind to accompany him and the rest of the men into camp. Mounting a load of army supplies, I rode in state to East Long Island, an emergency Red Cross nurse. And much work I found in settling the sick soldiers comfortably at Camp Wickoff, where there was a lack of everything, especially beds. But the energy of Col. Roosevelt promptly set things in order.

It was an unforgettable experience for me and not so sad a one at that, had I not been discouraged over the continued illness of my husband who failed to gain his health. After the camp was broken up and the Company scattered, I one day sought out Colonel Roosevelt in New York and appealed to him as to what should be done for Dr. Donaldson.

A sea voyage seemed the most salutary treatment for him, and soon we were off on a long cruise in a government ship.<sup>9</sup>

Portia Sprague as a child had loved her father and felt keenly the tearing apart of filial connection. For fourteen years she had not seen him. She was now grown up from a slight, dark-complexioned child into a tall, slender young woman. One day in Washington the father and daughter arranged to meet in the lobby of the Willard Hotel. Neither could identify the other until the clerk directed Portia's attention to a stooped and shrunken figure about to pass out the door. She ran after him and they embraced weeping. A long conversation followed, a building up of the wrecked but unforgotten past.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Upon the death of Dr. Donaldson, Ethel Chase with a young son to educate, took up the profession of journalism; while a member of the staff of a San Francisco newspaper, she went through the great earthquake, coming out broken in health. The last years of her life are brightened by the tender care of her son who has proven the pride and defense of her elderly years.

<sup>10</sup> For a period of time, Portia Sprague was employed in the Treasury Department; she then married Mr. Whitney of Washington, and upon his death she became the wife of Mr. Browning of Narragansett Pier. She had no children. For a few brief years that the frail little Kitty lived after the mother was gone Portia assumed maternal care of her sister.



## XXII

### LAST DAYS

**T**HE closing years of the dramatic life of Kate Chase were clouded with an almost impenetrable gloom. Poverty pursued her like a Nemesis, from which she could never escape. Yet the Will to Live drove this woman forward. When her resources were entirely gone and she could no longer borrow money for her current living expenses, she attempted to wring a maintenance out of her farm, the acreage of Edgewood. She tried raising chickens and keeping a dairy; she opened a store in Eckington, a nearby suburb of Washington, from which she disposed of her products; for a time, she peddled the milk and lived over the store. Kate Chase swallowed her pride and ate humble pie for the sake of keeping body and soul together, but to no avail. She failed in business.

Never accustomed either to making or saving money, she possessed no managing ability. Since her borrowing power was exhausted, Kate Chase must now resort to begging assistance of her former friends. Again and again she had mortgaged the Edgewood property; and at last, when threatened with foreclosure, she went back to her native State to appeal for funds. She wished to secure \$15,000; she received less than \$5,000; few of her father's old friends were left and her plea too frequently fell on deaf, indifferent ears. A new generation had taken the place of the one that knew the Chases

of Cincinnati, and Kate now aged and careworn was unrecognized. For herself, the city had a strange yet familiar aspect. She hunted up the old law office of Chase and Ball, where the worn and faded sign still hung. She drove out to the old farm on the Lower Road, and lived over again in memory her childhood and early youth; she visited her father's grave, where she herself expected to be laid when her harried life was over—how soon she could not anticipate; while still in the flesh, Kate Chase would never say die. She must perforce continue the struggle.

She journeyed to Columbus and called upon William McKinley, then Governor of the State. Though he was courteous and sympathetic, he could do but little for her. As he drove through the town beside this distinguished looking lady with erect carriage and snow-white hair, all eyes were turned towards them—for one brief moment, Kate Chase again was the cynosure of all eyes. A group of old residents, who had known her in her débutante days when she had cut a wide swath in society, gazed upon the time-saddened countenance, scarcely believing she could be the same person as that of the dominant daughter of their one-time governor. Everywhere, Kate aroused pity, which she despised; no hand proffered pelf. She would have returned to her home absolutely disheartened but for one renewed friendship with an anti-bellum member of Congress from Ohio and a lifelong friend of Salmon Portland Chase, Charles Hamlin, who seriously considered the purchase of Edgewood. The old gentleman came on to Washington to visit Mrs. Chase and see the property. The deal was about to be completed when an unfortunate accident prevented. As Mr. Hamlin was strolling

through the grounds, he was set upon by a Negro desperado, and died of the shock. Thus vanished Kate's dream.

New York now became the Mecca of her hope, and there she went to seek out men of wealth and persuade them to invest their capital in the mortgaged home, where she wished to live out her last days. Kate Chase became a familiar figure in lower New York. Dressed in her shabby black, she went about in the Wall Street section to call upon money magnates. Success was long postponed. Late in the year '94, announcement was made of the forthcoming sale of Edgewood, but it did not come to pass. Finally, at long last, help was forthcoming, and that through a man Kate Chase as a young woman had known in Washington, when she was a favorite of Fortune and he a poor newspaper correspondent. Thirty-five years had turned the tables. Henry Villard felt pity for the daughter of Salmon Portland Chase, who had been "kindness itself" to this obscure, struggling reporter; he went about among his millionaire friends <sup>1</sup> and raised a sum sufficient to pay the mortgage <sup>2</sup> and to assure her a maintenance fund for the upkeep of Edgewood, until she might sell the property for a handsome price—this she still fondly dreamed of realizing—something like \$100,000, she estimated the estate was worth. In January, 1896, the negotiations inaugurated by Mr. Villard were completed and the funds placed in her name. Kate Chase was now relieved of anxiety which long had harrowed her mind.

<sup>1</sup> The contributors to the fund were: Henry Villard, Levi P. Morton, Collis P. Huntington, Seth Low, J. Pierpont Morgan, Paul J. Sorg, and Mary W. Cooper. The gross amount was \$80,000.

<sup>2</sup> A mortgage of \$40,000 was held by the Washington Loan and Trust Company.

Though assistance was late in coming, it was none the less grateful. A new lease of life had been granted her. Her spirits revived. Though no longer young and far from well, Kate Chase still retained, spasmodically at least, the power of attracting the admiration of men, a fact testified to by more than one who during her last years had occasion to call upon the famed beauty of bygone days. That her pride had not been wholly killed by the humiliations she had suffered was evident, when she tried to make a favorable impression upon her caller. Then it was she brought out her faded finery, adjusted the lace fichu, and assumed a semblance of her former self. And by the magic of mind she was able to persuade the gentleman that she yet was beautiful and charming. On other less fortunate occasions, this erstwhile queen of society whose Paris wardrobe was the marvel fashion-show of Washington, presented an altogether disappointing appearance.

While the negotiations for the transfer of her property were pending, and she chanced to be in New York, Kate Chase was entertained at Thorwood, the Villard country place at Dobbs Ferry. Many years later, Mrs. Fanny Garrison Villard recalled in retrospect the picture of her guest, who made a most disappointing impression as compared with the vision of Kate Chase in her halcyon days. Mrs. Villard tells the story.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1866, I went to Washington as a bride. My husband through his previous experience in that city during the War as a newspaperman, on his return was quickly received into the official circle, and with him, myself, of course. I remember a large ball we attended, a few days after our arrival on our honeymoon, possibly a presidential assembly. The splendid setting remains vivid still to me. The spacious

<sup>3</sup> In an interview with the author.

ballroom, the women in elegant gowns, the dignified senators with their wives; diplomatic corps in tinsel and gold lace; the military men, still the heroes of all occasions. The center of attraction, the belle of the ball, was the fascinating Kate Chase. Yes, she still was called Kate Chase, in spite of the fact that she had married Senator Sprague three years previously; and that was many, many years before the idea of a woman's right to her maiden name had been broached. Kate Chase was a personality with an innate privilege to hold her professional title and leading society was her profession—and I should add, acting as manager of her father's political campaigns. But it was in the ball room that she shone most resplendent.

Kate Chase was the most bewitching of queens in the garden of roses. I can see her still, a regal figure, around which diplomats and military men were drawn, all seeking a smile or a dance. General Grant, idol of the hour, a better fighter than a dancer, be it said, as Kate's partner, was awkwardly going through the mazes of the lancers; when he became momentarily distracted by another fair lady, Kate challenged the General with charming grace. I a simple young home body from New England never before had seen so beautiful and brilliant a creature as Kate Chase; and it seemed to me then that nothing could blight her perfection. That was the only time I ever saw her until towards the end of her life when she was overtaken by misfortune and poverty, and my husband was exerting himself in her behalf. One day, he said to me, "Would you mind inviting Mrs. Kate Chase to our home for a few days?" I replied that I would be happy to receive a woman I had so much admired years before. She came with my husband; I never would have recognized her otherwise. The glorious eyes were dull and inflamed as though scalded by salt tears; she apologized for her looks, saying that she had been on the coast of Maine and the air did not agree with her—a subterfuge, I felt sure. Poor broken woman! she elicited my pity but not my admiration.

Kate Chase returned to Edgewood to wait for the last call to go hence. There she remained a recluse, abandoned by the world. Whenever she drove out, she went in an old broken-down carriage and herself held

the reins, with hands coarsened and reddened by toil, gloved in soiled white kid gloves, last remnant of French frivolities she formerly had purchased by the gross. She became excessively careless in her dress and housekeeping; all incentive was extinguished. So unpleasant did her daughter, Portia, find her mother's home that she abandoned it altogether and went back to live in Rhode Island with her Sprague relatives.

Poor little Kitty, a woman in years but a child in mind, and frail in health, was the only daughter who was left for the mother to love and cherish. Ethel had now her own family to care for and was unable except at rare intervals to spend her time at Edgewood, although her only child, little Chase Donaldson—and he was declared to be “all Chase”—Kate's only grandchild, was left a number of months in the care of his grandmother, his Nama, he called her. A delightful picture of the two has been handed down.

Each morning as she made the rounds of the farm, the baby was at her heels. Often, in going through the chicken yard, the youngster would grab the wee fowls by the throat, and Grandmother would come along just in time to rescue them. Sometimes the mischievous laddie loved to hide himself among the choice rose bushes and pull off the blossoms; when discovered, Nama would reprove him gently with, “No, no, Baby must not.” She never punished him and his mother on her return found a very much spoiled baby.

Kate Chase now faced solitude, with little Kitty and the two dogs as companions—the small terrier and the faithful collie. Ill health that had long been draining the superb stamina of this woman, now was preparing to take the last draught. The Chase will withstood to

the last and she refused, like her father, to acknowledge increasing weakness. Both were to die in harness. By a happy coincidence, however, Kate Chase had the comfort of a friend with her during the last months of her life, Sally Kilbreth McLean, a chum of her girlhood days at Miss Haines' School. As together they reminisced of the past, Kate revealed chapters in her career unknown to others. She told how, one severe winter a few years previous, when Kitty was taken with hemorrhages and the snow was too deep for the mother to get out of the grounds to the street for assistance, she found an old navy pistol and fired it off to attract attention to her plight; in the rebound, nearly dislocating her shoulder. A certain coal dealer in the neighborhood, more than once, as she admitted, had come to her rescue with fuel and food.

She dwelt mournfully over the tragedies of her life, and proudly of the triumphs. Sitting on the broad veranda in the twilight of an early summer's day, Kate Chase was wont to let her eyes gaze off over the valley below, to the dome of the Capitol and beyond where the Potomac shone mistily in the golden light, and with touching pathos in her voice remind herself of her influence and renown. "Once I was a personage; now I am forgotten. Once, great statesmen found their way to my door, proud of my acquaintance; now, none but the poor and lowly seek me out. I am as though already dead."

Kate Chase closed her eyes upon the world on the last day of July, 1899. Had she lived thirteen days longer, she would have celebrated her fifty-ninth birthday. She had medical assistance only at the very last. She fought Death alone; perhaps, she welcomed the

dark visitant. Lying in calm peace, the lines of grief were erased from her features; the long curling lashes of those wonderful eyes lay upon her pale cheeks. The red-brown hair, now snow-white, was draped with rare Duchesse lace, memento of regal days. The loving hands of the eldest daughter, Ethel Chase Donaldson, prepared the mother's body for burial. Few mourners wept before her bier. Both the dogs had been taken several miles away, and both found their way back to Edgewood, the morning after the funeral. Colored men, former servants of Mrs. Chase, acted as pall-bearers.

Pomp and panoply befitting the demise of a queen were quite wanting; still, she was not without her last honors. The United States Government <sup>4</sup> provided a special car to take the remains to her home city, Cincinnati, where she was laid beside her father, underneath a magnificent elm in Spring Grove Cemetery. Nothing save simple slabs marked the spot until some years afterwards, when a handsome granite shaft was erected over the grave of her distinguished father, a memorial contributed by the American Bar Association, in honor of a great Chief Justice. William Howard Taft pronounced the eulogy. Though unmentioned in words, the daughter whose life was so closely intertwined with that of her father, inevitably shared the honors of the occasion, for who can think of one without the other—two minds and hearts cemented.

Salmon Portland Chase and Catherine Jane Chase, equally endowed by Nature with preëminent talent were converted by life into quite different personalities. The one, being a man-child, was early thrown out upon his own resources to carve a name for himself; while

<sup>4</sup> William McKinley, President



the girl, protected and shielded and indulged, was molded by convention into a society actress whose part was to play the star rôle in Life's light comedies. She won the applause of her audience who threw her bouquets and courted her favors until Fortune deprived the leading lady of her supremacy, when she was quickly forgotten. He, on the other hand, suffered malignity and the opprobrium of misprized public service, yet carved for himself a statue of noble proportions and godlike dignity, that will stand throughout the years, increasingly admired and extolled. The father served his day and generation, the daughter left little impress upon the community cosmos save that of self-seeking ambition.

She wrote her life history in the sand and only legend and tradition like stray sea weed remain. At her death it was reported that she had written the story of the stirring times in which she had lived; no scrap of record was found; her anxiety seems to have been to destroy every least clue to the inner workings of her soul. Little was left to her posterity except a few letters to her father written in her beautiful handwriting, and a few books with fly-leaf quotations and underlined sentiments, revealing but a glint of her mind and heart.<sup>5</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> These lines were found on the fly leaf of a book belonging to Kate Chase:

Canst thou bear cold and hunger?  
Can these arms  
Framed for the tender offices of love,  
Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty?

And these were underscored in a volume of verse belonging to her:

Ah, little think the gay licentious crowd  
Whom pleasure, power and affluence surround;  
They who their thoughtless hours in giddy mirth  
And wanton, often cruel riot waste—

year of her death, a public sale of the remaining art treasures scattered the last vestige of the once precious and valuable belongings of this one-time Queen of Society.

In the San Francisco earthquake fire, Ethel Chase Donaldson, who barely escaped with her life, saw destroyed every last souvenir of Edgewood, and her beloved mother. The home itself fell into the reverent hands of the Sisters of Mt. Carmel where they opened a retreat and orphanage. The old Mansion corner 6th and E Sts., N.W., also was purchased by the Catholic Church to be used as a home with public cafeteria below stairs. Here friends of Kate Chase suffer no pain of desecration if they perchance drop in to visit the old landmark.

Edgewood, the magnificent old estate, a house set upon a hill and rich in tradition, was finally fated to pass into the hands of greedy financiers indifferent to the sacredness of history. The superb walls of Flemish brick were demolished, the mahogany staircase was sold for old lumber, and the magnificent chandelier went—who knows where? One Sabbath morning in the autumn of 1931, the writer wandered sadly and meditatively about the desolate grounds, noting the fall of the leaves from the giant trees, many wantonly destroyed by fire.

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<sup>5</sup> Footnote *continued*.

Ah, little think they while they dance along,  
How many feel this very moment death  
And all the sad variety of pain;

How many drink the cup  
Of baleful grief, or eat the bitter bread  
Of misery, sore pierced by wintry winds;

How many shrink into the sordid hut  
Of cheerless poverty.

Edgewood was to be replaced by a modern business building. Today, the very site itself is impossible of identification. Thus has been eliminated the last memory of a great home and its once famous occupants. And Life rushes by unheeding.

## COMMENTS OF THE PRESS ON THE DEATH OF KATE CHASE

*Philadelphia Record*: a "dominant influence over public men and the course of public events."

*Chattanooga Times*: a "consummate woman of affairs even in her declining days. Though her straitened condition was evident in her apparel, still the gracious queen that charmed all by her manners."

*Washington Evening Star*: "No name in this city evokes the flood of reminiscence as does Kate Chase. Her devotion to her father only measured by her veneration for his memory. The most brilliant woman of her day. None outshone her."

*Springfield Republican*: "It was said a few years ago that she was writing a book of reminiscences of the war time and later. It must be hoped that she had done so, for there should be some memorial left besides the transient rumor of the day, of so remarkable and ineffective a life."

*Boston Globe*: Had Kate Chase chosen from among her throng of suitors almost any one else than the handsome and wealthy young Governor of Rhode Island, she might have had a career of more lasting brilliancy than fate accorded her; almost certainly it would have been happier.

*Philadelphia Times*: "All that she sought, all that she accepted, all that she gained became ashes on her lips, and the proud woman was thrust down from the pinnacle on which she stood to endure not only the pangs of poverty and neglect but of calumny while she lived. The fate of Queen Guinevere was not more bitter because there is reason to believe that Roscoe Conkling was her Sir Launcelot."

*Springfield Republican*: "Mr. Conkling was such a man as she should have mated with but there was no element of disgrace in his relations with her."

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1840 August 13—Born, Catherine Jane Chase.  
1845 September 29—Died, Eliza Ann Chase.  
1846 November 6—Married, Salmon Portland Chase and Sarah Bella Dunlop Ludlow.  
1847—Kate Chase enters Miss Haines' private school New York City. Janet Ralston Chase is born.  
1849 February 22—S. P. Chase elected to the United States Senate.  
1852 January 13—Died, Sarah B. Ludlow Chase.  
1856—S. P. Chase elected Governor of Ohio.  
1861—S. P. Chase appointed Secretary of the Treasury.  
Kate Chase becomes hostess of the mansion E & 6th Street NW Washington D.C.  
1863 November 12—Kate Chase and William Sprague married.  
1864 February—The Pomeroy Bulletin published.  
April—The Blair attack on Chase.  
June—Secretary Chase resigns.  
September—S. P. Chase starts campaign for Lincoln.  
December—S. P. Chase nominated Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court.  
1865—March 4—Chief Justice Chase administers the oath of office to Abraham Lincoln.  
April 14 A.M.—Chief Justice Chase sends a note to President Lincoln with the Bible on which he had been sworn into office; early evening receives word of the President's assassination.  
April 15 A.M.—Chief Justice Chase administers oath of office to Andrew Johnson.  
May—The Chief Justice journeys South to study conditions; the Spragues are settled in their Narragansett home for the Summer.  
June—William Sprague Jr. born.  
1866 April—Kate Chase Sprague makes her first voyage to Europe.  
October—Senator Sprague sails to join his wife.  
December—The Spragues return to Washington.

## 288 KATE CHASE, DOMINANT DAUGHTER

- 1867—Kate Chase Sprague makes a second journey to Europe.
- 1868 February 24—May 26—Chief Justice Chase presides over the Johnson impeachment trial.  
July 4—The Democratic Convention opens in New York City; Kate Chase as his manager furthers her father's candidacy; following her defeat she retires a disappointed woman to Canonchet her newly erected summer home.
- 1869 April—Senator Sprague delivers sensational speeches.  
October—The Spragues' second child is born and named Ethel.
- 1870—Chief Justice Chase is stricken with paralysis; he convalesces at Canonchet.
- 1871—Janet Ralston Chase is married to William S. Hoyt.
- 1872—Portia Sprague second daughter of Kate Chase and William Sprague is born.
- 1873—Death of Salmon Portland Chase.  
Birth of Katherine "Kitty" third daughter of the Spragues.  
The Sprague Failure; Kate Chase establishes her home at Edgewood.
- 1879 August—Climax of the Sprague-Conkling Scandal.
- 1882—Divorce granted to Catherine J. from William Sprague.
- 1883—Kate Chase takes up residence at Fontainebleau for the education of her daughters.
- 1886—Mrs. Chase returns home to attend ceremonies incident to the removal of the remains of Salmon Portland Chase from Washington to Cincinnati.
- 1890—William Sprague Jr. commits suicide.
- 1896—Negotiations are completed for the purchase of mortgage indebtedness against Edgewood and the granting of a maintenance fund for its upkeep.
- 1899 July 31—Kate Chase dies; the Government provides a special car for the removal of her body to Cincinnati to be buried next her father's grave.

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## APPENDIX



# I

## THE POMEROY BULLETIN

### "THE FIRST MANIFESTO OF THE CHASE MEN"

Washington, D. C., Feb., 1864

"The movements recently made throughout the country to secure the renomination of President Lincoln render necessary some counteraction on the part of those unconditional friends of the Union who differ from the policy of his administration.

"So long as no efforts were made to forestall the political action of the people it was thought both wise & patriotic for all true friends of the government to devote their influence to the suppression of the rebellion. But when it becomes evident that party machinery and official influence are being used to secure the perpetuation of the present administration, those who conscientiously believe that the interests of the country & of freedom demand a change in favor of vigor & purity & nationality have no choice but to appeal at once to the people before it shall be too late to secure a fair discussion of principles.

"Those in behalf of whom this communication is made have thoroughly surveyed the political field, & have arrived at the following conclusions:—

1. That even were the re-election of Mr. Lincoln desirable, it is practically impossible against the union of influences which oppose him.

2. That should he be re-elected, his manifest tendency towards compromise & temporary expedients of policy will become stronger during a second term than it has been in the first, & the cause of human liberty & the dignity & honor of the nation suffer proportionately: while the war may continue to languish during the whole administration, till the public debt shall become a burden too great to be borne.

3. That the patronage of the government through the

necessities of war, has been rapidly increased, & to such an enormous extent, & so loosely placed, as to render the application of the "one term principle" absolutely essential to the certain safety of our republican institutions.

4. That we find united in Hon. Salmon P. Chase more of the qualities needed in a President during the next four years than in any other individual candidate; his record, clear & unimpeachable, showing him to be a statesman of rare ability & an administrator of the very highest order, while his private character furnishes the surest obtainable guarantee of economy & purity in the management of public affairs.

5. That the discussion of the Presidential, already commenced by the friends of Mr. Lincoln, has developed a popularity & strength in Mr. Chase unexpected even to his warmest admirers; & while we are aware that his strength is at present unorganized & no condition to manifest its real magnitude, we are satisfied that it only needs an extent sufficient to overcome all opposing obstacles.

"For these reasons the friends of Mr. Chase have determined on measures which will present his claims fairly & at once to the country. A central organization has been effected, which already has its connections in all the States, & the object of which is to enable his friends everywhere most effectually to promote his elevation to the Presidency. We wish the hearty co-operation of all those in favor of the speedy restoration of the Union upon the basis of universal freedom & who desire the administration of the government during the first period of its new life which shall, to the fullest extent, develop the capacity of free institutions, enlarge the resources of the Country, diminish the burdens of taxation, elevate the standard of public & private morality, vindicate the honor of the republic before the world, & in all things make our American nationality the fairest example for imitation which human progress has ever achieved.

"If these objects meet your approval you can render efficient aid by exerting yourself at once to organize your section of the country & by corresponding with the Chairman of the National Executive Committee, for the purpose either of receiving or imparting information.

Very respectfully,

S. C. Pomeroy

Chairman Nat'l Exec. Comm.

N. Y. Herald, Monday, Feb. 22, 1864.

## II

## RESOLUTIONS

The text of Senator Sprague's speech in which he denounced the First Rhode Island Regiment which he himself had raised and equipped, appeared in the Providence Journal of April 12th, '69. On Friday evening, the 16th, Company F. the color company of that organization held a meeting in the armory of the Newport Artillery and adopted the following preamble and resolutions which were published by the Journal on the 19th. They indicate more clearly than can be described the sentiment of the people of that time:

"Whereas The People of the State of Rhode Island reposing confidence in the insignificance of William Sprague as a Senator for a previous term did with a generous extension of that confidence return him to the Senate of the United States for a further period of six years, exalting him to the highest station in their gift, and whereas with base ingratitude he now endeavors to betray that confidence by suddenly terminating his long and unprofitable silence to calumniate our most honored fellow citizens, to falsify alike the faithful services of the First Regiment and that of its beloved and revered commander, and to repudiate his own previously recorded testimony to the value of their services;

"RESOLVED That the slanders uttered in the U. S. Senate call for our emphatic denial, and we do brand the account there given of the conduct of our regiment in that battle as totally false.

"RESOLVED That as members of the First Regiment, we confidently appeal from the slanders of a seeker of notoriety to the verdict of our fellow citizens whose watchful interest and care made them familiar with our history to whose decision we confide the award of whatever of praise or of blame we may have earned.

"RESOLVED That we tender our thanks to Senator Anthony for his able and brilliant defense of our regiment and his scathing rebuke of the fanatic whose madness has led him to attack the dearest and most honored interests of the State.

"RESOLVED That we renew to our commander, Gov. Burnside, the assurance of our confidence, regards and affection and feel that his fame as a defender of the Union and his character as a brave and Christian soldier is far beyond the reach of any attempt on the part of an angry and disappointed, traitorous politician.

"RESOLVED That a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to Gov. Burnside, Senator Anthony and to the papers of the State: also that copy be transmitted to Senator Sprague."

(Taken from the typewritten article *Life and Character of William Sprague* by George S. Peck, M.D.)

### III

#### THE SPRAGUE FAILURE

As hard times approached in the early 70's, the A. and W. Sprague Manufacturing Company became seriously embarrassed. Two of the Sprague Banks in Providence appealed for aid and one loan was made them; but Governor Sprague's credit had been weakened by his Senate attack of April '69—he was no longer the adored hero of the town. He had made enemies and lost friends and he was to suffer for it. The signal of the ultimate crash came with the protesting of \$150,000 worth of paper; creditors pressed for payment of an indebtedness of \$2,500,000, and at the same time they declined to aid the corporation in borrowing money. An agreement was finally made with the Spragues to execute a deed of trust for the entire Sprague property and a Committee appointed to administer the estate. The refusal of the Committee, however, to accept full responsibility for their acts led to the surprising decision of the Spragues themselves, without consent of the creditors, to execute the deed to a citizen of the town, Zechariah Chafee, who accepted full responsibility personally for his acts. The appointment was at last made agreeable to everybody and the history of the Sprague Trust Deed began. Coincident with the taking over of the management of the Sprague properties, promissory notes were issued, to run three years, or until January 1st, 1877. For two years interest was paid



on them; but with the continuance of hard times the Trustee was compelled to cease paying interest on the notes. The Spragues were then finally and irretrievably bankrupt and it became necessary to settle the estate for the benefit of the creditors. For five years Mr. Chafee was engaged in managing the various mills with an employed force of 12,000 hands. Governor Sprague for a time assisted and thus received his support and that of his family; but later he refused to "work on a salary for any man." Business was dull. The creditors were anxious over the slow returns and the stockholders were forced to pay a 40% assessment to "make good."

Governor Sprague was unable single-handed to sustain the structure. He needed help, cooperation from his fellow-townsmen, but when they came forward to assist he refused their help and retired to let the trustees manage as best they could.

Bitter feeling against William Sprague was engendered by his apparent lack of interest in the effort to save the business and work out something acceptable to all concerned. Trustee Chafee who up to this time, had been looked kindly upon by the Spragues, now came under their condemnation for alleged favoritism to the creditors, and the fight was on. A series of lawsuits was begun, involving the employment of a number of attorneys and assistants, making an expensive legal warfare, through which many of the prominent families of Providence today can trace their rise in the world. A long, slow process of sale was begun by the Sprague lawyers, with the warning off of auction bidders. Court action was invoked by the debtor party to attack the validity of the trust deed; and memorable scenes took place. It became definitely known that the Sprague assets would amount to a small percentage of their original value, though for ten years the report of conditions showed \$16,000,000 assets to \$14,000,000 debts. Governor Sprague's property, including Canonchet, became involved in a series of litigations which caused the loss of everything except this residence.

## IV

## THE MERCHANT'S WIFE

"Every family, every dwelling, every life, has its drop curtain, and little we realize while contemplating the unruffled surface what tragedies are being played out behind."

In the Shepley Library, on Benefit Street, Providence, among the rare old books, may be seen a small volume entitled, "The Merchant's Wife," by Mary Eliza Viall, dedicated "to my parents—honored and faithful," and having as an opening sentence the above arresting lines. Ask a member of one of the "old families" of the city for the life-history of the author and you will be told a sad, tragic tale.

In the days of his high fame, when he was wont to ride the streets of this staid old city upon his magnificent white charger, with his colored orderly in front, Colonel Sprague was then a figure to charm more susceptible young maidens than the daughter of the Vialls, one of the most highly respected families of Providence. Of a romantic nature, given to poetic rhapsodies and day-dreaming, the young daughter fell "crazily in love with Colonel Sprague." To her mind he was a god, an Apollo, a superman. Having fed her fancy with sentimental verse and the free love philosophy of Madame de Staël, the poor young girl became obsessed with the modern theory of the right of a superior woman to experience motherhood outside of marriage. She loved William Sprague and she wished him as the father of her child. All thought of the inevitable reaction of society to this unconventional doctrine was cast aside. The young Lothario and herself, both of superior intellect, were outside the pale of ordinary limitations—so she fancied. Their child would be a genius. Before the babe was born the deluded young mother realized too well the fatal mistake she had made. Her family were thrown into the direst distress because of her condition, and acting upon the spur of self-preservation of their family honor, they decided that a marriage ceremony was the only solution of the situation. The father of the child deserted his sweetheart and refused to look at her save in secret. A young officer of the army, however, "for a consideration," went through the form that joined him to Miss Viall and then

promptly left her. That happened before the birth of the child, whom the young mother named Hamlet. A married sister of the unhappy mother refused to adopt the boy, but a pension was arranged for him.

From that day the history of Mary Eliza Viall was a mournful story. Stamped with the Scarlet Letter, shunned by the society in which formerly she had shone as a brilliant star, she sought solace in stimulants and became a confirmed alcoholic. She "drank frightfully," so tradition says. "Good people" avoided her as they would a common prostitute. To speak to this outlaw on the street was an act highly criticized. One dear old lady of the aristocracy, in telling the painful story of the downfall of this once lovely and talented girl, says with a sweetly sympathetic sigh, "I never could pass her by as everyone did, without speaking to her. I always spoke to poor Mary Eliza Viall."

The little volume, "A Merchant's Wife," in the light of autobiographical revelation is most interesting, even fascinating. To those acquainted with the prototype characters, the originals in this revelatory romance are readily recognized, although they are veiled by assumed names and minor details of their lives are changed. The merchant, Hamlet, is William Sprague, the wife, Avis, is Kate Chase; the statesman, Secretary Chase. Miss Viall herself figures in the story under the name Miriam. The writer delineates the hero of the romance as he marched away to offer his regiment to Lincoln after the firing on Sumter, picturing the enthusiastic, admiring people watching him go forth to war . . . "not a man, woman or child, in all that vast crowd assembled along the line of march, who did not gaze with wonder and admiration upon the handsome cavalier, the magnificent patriot, the noble young man going forth from their midst to fight for them—for Liberty and God. Long live the King!"

Of her own infatuation for the young officer, she says: "thrice unhappy the woman who loves not only unwisely but too well—but like the moth has set her affections upon a star. . . ."

And of his being drawn into the sweet snare set by the Statesman and his daughter: "Alas! for that most dire infatuation which blinded him to the flaming net into which the statesman and his daughter were softly and deftly drawn in him." The ambition which dominated Kate Chase is well depicted. "Love for her father was the one strong point in

this lady's character; faith, rather one might say, in that father's power to reach the pinnacle of Avis' goal."

The common gossip concerning the Statesman's love affairs is cleverly introduced: "It was whispered the gallant widower ventured at one time the thought of conferring the White House honors (in embryo) upon another fair head; but the right-minded daughter put a stop to that forthwith and forever. . . ."

The famous speechmaking of Senator Sprague, occupies a prominent place in the narrative. Referring to the hero's natural qualifications in the role he selected to play, the author says:

"And moreover, Hamlet, had in his natural possession two telling attributes—a sympathetic voice and appearance. It should be with him as with Clay and Chatham—the man, rather than the writer, was charming you! . . . Apropos of the speeches, and the state of domestic affairs at that time, I may favor you with an anecdote.

"Shortly after the Senator's maiden speech, which did maddeningly disappoint both his lordship and his ladyship's friends,—Madame was present at a celebrated debate in the Upper House.

"The Senator's wife sat with her customary inevitable grace—condescendingly drooping those wonderful eyes over the body below, until the member from Massachusetts had concluded—when she slowly rose and passed out into the corridor, becoming speedily the centre of an admiring group. . . . Her husband had observed her exit, and hastened to join one whom he ever treated with marked politeness. . . . "Is there anything I can do for you?" . . . "Nothing (the Massachusetts member had not taken the lady's party side of the question) but to go in there and make a speech,—and that you *can't* do!"

"Such conduct was not calculated to be very appetizing or wholesome to a morbidly sensitive man—I heard an eye-witness of this painful scene aver he "pitied him" as he speechlessly crept away. . . .

"There is another nuptial anecdote of this ambitious couple which may interest you. . . . On another memorable day in the following long session, my lady comes down to the House of Senators, looking from her place in the galleries like some haughty lily bending its head, and sending forth a sweet fragrance. This time she has come to listen to her husband

who has been speaking for several days, and better than formerly, only in the rankest revolutionaryism—with the most startling reflections, and constitutional heresy. . . . For three days Hamlet has been at work digging his grave. . . . He is about to throw out the last shovelful when he abruptly pauses, and looks towards the galleries; he has previously pointed to the sores upon the Body Politic and Financial, and sighed for the ultimate condition of the country: he now delicately and gravely hints at a more vital corruption, and strikingly expresses “the decaying *heart* of the Republic” . . . It was like a hot cannon-ball hissing into the Chamber. . . . Fathers, brothers, husbands, were outraged . . . and there was a general leaping of swords from their scabbards to the defense of the American woman, to the defense of the insulted queen of the capitol. The languid humility of haughtiness (the fashionable pose of the period) is abandoned. . . . Some women are glorious in wrath; the lily was not; its face now bolt upright on the stem is reddening fast, and begins to look like the face of any other angry red-faced woman. . . . For almost the first time in her life the Statesman’s daughter has dropped her mask (she is no longer lovely); and as she clutches at the lace shawl and quickly struts up the narrow *calle* (her seat had been in the first row) you are at a loss to know how she could ever have won that encomium of “*la grace personifíee*,” an eye-witness from the corridor laughingly remarked, “I believe, ’pon honor, she’s capable of hitting him with the coral stick of her parasol. . . . But the best of it all was Hamlet himself had not thought of his wife in his speech,—being in that exalted frame of mind peculiar sometimes to intense natures which disdains personalities, and loses itself in midforest of grand themes; certainly, he had no idea of offering the public a cap to crown him with; and he was the last man unwittingly to heap reproaches upon women, when he had borne more than any other from one, just because she *was* a woman. . . . Yet he who was their friend made them an enemy. . . .

“I like to think of those days which are no more, when careful students of men and history thought to discover . . . a resemblance between our hero and Napoleon. There was the same eccentricity of manner and of dress; that belief in a destiny; that antagonism for the lawyers; a custom, so to speak, of cloaking himself and his movements in a veil of

mystery—all of which his enemies maintained was assumed in order to suggest the great original. . . . Poor Hamlet, his manners *were* not very modish in the beginning; but he grew into a gentleman, which from all accounts, his great master never did; his Josephine *did* do him one service; for poor Miriam to her dying day would never have sought to change them, believing with Aspasia that fine manners are not an essential livery of genius"; "the movers of our souls," she said, "have surely the right to throw out their limbs as cavalierly as they please on the world that belongs to them, and before the creatures they have animated."

Of her own pitiful death, the author of this realistic frenzy of her highly wrought emotions, shot through as it is with the flashlights of her suffering, forecasts the end of her own brief life when the little candle had burned down to the socket. Of her heroine's unhappy life she says her "existence had long been stretched upon the rack of feeling and suffering. The wonder was how that harp of a thousand strings kept in tune so long. As the sudden flight of birds, Miriam disappeared from mortal sight . . . the golden bowl was broken. . . . What pathos in the thought that nothing in the life of this noblest of women was ever of so much value to her fellow creatures as the leaving of it."

## V

### STORMING CANONCHET

Canonchet was to be sold under a sheriff's writ, on August 15, 1882. When Auctioneer Hall, Trustee Chafee, and Frank E. Moulton, who was prepared to bid it in, arrived on the estate, they found the lawyer, the Governor, and a squad of his former employees patrolling the grounds with rifles. He had made an arsenal of his castle, with two cases of Martini rifles with which a force from Quidnick and Natick had been armed and drilled by their former master with great care; adopting a code of signals, he had placed a line of sentinels around the estate. From the Tower that reached high above the surrounding groves and from which Whale Rock and Point Judith lighthouses could be seen, the fighting Governor took his stand and raised a flag, which the reporters on the

spot described as a "bloody shirt." Down on the lawn which sloped to the creek, Willie, the 17-year-old son of Sprague, on a gray pony, together with a large man on a white horse, stood guard, both with huge clubs. Thus fortified, the Master and his men awaited the invasions of the law and its officers. Sprague patrolled the parapet with war-like step, his revolver glistening in the sun. Jessie Macomber, a servant of the house, armed with rifle guarded one entrance below.

By ten o'clock a crowd of newspaper correspondents and curiosity seekers arrived at the entrance. The bridge leading over the pond had been destroyed the night before, leaving nothing but the stringers. Mr. Hall, auctioneer, spoke:

"Gentlemen, we will go up under the trees where it is more comfortable," and he started to climb over the gate. Whereupon Willie came dashing down and jumped off his pony, just as Hall threw one leg over the wall. The youth spoke with the authority of a general. "I have orders not to let any person enter these grounds."

Hall turned to the group below. "Well, gentlemen, I guess we won't mind what the boy says."

Willie put his hand on his pistol pocket. "Anyone that goes over that gate, does it at his peril."

Hall stepped back.

A friend later asked the father, "Governor, did you send Willie down?" "I certainly did," he replied.

Shots were fired and the company at the gate dispersed. Later attempts failed. Moulton received slow justice from the U. S. Courts to which he applied for validation of his title. Ultimately, Mr. Moulton dying, his wife previous to her death, quit-claimed the property to the Spragues. About the same time, the Federal Courts declared the title good, thus validating the trust deed. In the end Chafee's work was declared legal by the courts, both State and National. Sprague and the trustees had both won out in their fight for Canonchet. The feeling was intensely strained between the two men. One day, Sprague happened to meet Chafee on the road, and Sprague attacked the elderly man, who was lame and walked with a cane, that article flying in one direction while poor Chafee sought to get away from the blows of his antagonist who "fought like a dog."





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